Life After Death
Resurrection, Judgment and the Final Destiny of the Soul

Volume 1

Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani

Translated, Annotated and Introduction by
Mohammad H. Faghfoory

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Belief in life after death gives meaning to life and illuminates the purpose of the creation of man. That is the reason it is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islamic tradition, without which other pillars become meaningless. The essential question, therefore, is what was the purpose of man's creation? Where will he go after death, and what is awaiting him there? The question of life after death and the uncertainty of what lies beyond have preoccupied man's mind since the beginning of creation. Is there life after death, and if there is, what are its peculiar characteristics? Where is the Hereafter, and how different or similar is it in comparison with man's life in this world? What is awaiting man in the Hereafter? What is the relationship between man's conduct on earth and his condition after death? When is the end of time and the Day of Resurrection? How is man revived and resurrected after he has perished? Is resurrection physical, spiritual, or both? How will the Day of Judgment unfold, and how will God judge believers and non-believers? And finally, how will man eventually meet his Creator?

Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani (1926-1995) was a respected intellectual, jurist, mystic and philosopher who trained and guided many students during his lifetime. He was an eloquent speaker and prolific writer, and left numerous books and treatises for later generations.

Muhammad H. Faghfoory is professor and director of the MA Program in Islamic Studies at the George Washington University where he teaches courses on Islam, Sufism, Islamic Art and Spirituality, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Islamic Political Thought, and Shi'ite Islam and other related courses.

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Life after Death, Resurrection, Judgment, and the Final Destiny of the Soul

Studies in Islamic Eschatology

Volume I

*

‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ḥusayni Ṭihrānī

Translated, annotated, and introduced

by

Mohammad H. Faghfoory

*

Studies in Islamic Tradition and
Religious Sciences Series
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Humbly dedicated to the blessed soul of ʿAllāmah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭihrānī, may God's Mercy be upon his immaculate soul.

Table of Transliteration of Arabic and Persian Characters

b = ب	Z = ز	f = ف
t = ت	s = س	q = ق
th = ث	sh = ش	k = ك
j = ج	ṣ = ص	l = ل
ḥ = ح	ḍ = ض	m = م
kh = خ	ṭ = ط	n = ن
d = د	ẓ = ظ	h = ه
dh = ذ	ʻ = ع	w = و
r = ر	gh = غ	y = ي
		ه = ة
long vowels ا ā ي ī و ū	**short vowels** َ a ِ i ُ u	**diphthongs** وَ aw' يّ ى Iy (final form ī) ى ي ai (ay) وّ uww (final form ū)
Persian letters added to the Arabic alphabet	پ p چ ch ژ zh گ g	

Translator's Introduction

Belief in life after death gives meaning to life and illuminates the purpose of the creation of man. That is the reason it is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islamic tradition, without which other pillars become meaningless. The essential question, therefore, is what was the purpose of man's creation? Where will he go after death, and what is awaiting him there?

The question of life after death and the uncertainty of what lies beyond have preoccupied man's mind since the beginning of creation. Is there life after death, and if there is, what are its peculiar characteristics? Where is the Hereafter, and how different or similar is it in comparison with man's life in this world? What is awaiting man in the Hereafter? What is the relationship between man's conduct on earth and his condition after death? When is the end of time and the Day of Resurrection? How is man revived and resurrected after he has perished? Is resurrection physical, spiritual, or both? How will the Day of Judgment unfold, and how will God judge believers and non-believers? And finally, how will man eventually meet his Creator?

What is presented in the following pages is 40 of 75 discourses that 'Allāmah Ṭihrānī presented privately to a select group of his students and disciples in Mashhad. The remaining 35 discourses will constitute Volume Two of this study. During those sessions, relevant spiritual and intellectual issues, including questions and answers on complicated topics, were discussed. The collection was originally published in 10 volumes jointly by Mashhad University Press and 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭaba'ī's publishing House in Mashhad between 1361/1982 and 1389/2010. This book attempts to answer these and many other related questions from an Islamic point of view. It is based on the Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet, the narrations and sayings of the Shī'a Imāms, and philosophical writings and mystical literature in Persian and Arabic, as well as the knowledge and experience of the author. This is one of the most

important and authoritative books ever written on the subject of the human state from the moment of man's conception to the time when he meets his Lord.

Its author, the late 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ḥusayni Ṭihrānī, was born in Tehran in 1303/1925 (1345h) and passed away in Mashhad in 1374/1995 (1416h). He is related to many prominent Shī'i-Iranian *'ulamā'* of previous centuries by birth or marriage, including such notable scholars as Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, Mirzā Muhammad Ṭihrānī, Muhammad Ṣāliḥ Khātūnābādi, and Sayyid Mahdi Baḥr al-'Ulum.[1]

'Allāmah Ṭihrānī received his education in Tehran, Qom, and Najaf. Several scholars and Gnostics played important roles in his intellectual and spiritual life, the most notable among them being 'Allāmah Sayyid Mohammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭaba'ī, who initiated Ṭihrānī into gnosis (*irfan*), Ḥajj 'Abbas Qūchāni, and Ḥajj Sayyid Hāshim Ḥaddād (d. 1984). When he returned from Najaf, he settled in Tehran for a while and then moved to Mashhad, where he lived and taught until his death in 1374/1995 (1416 H).

Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ḥusayni Ṭihrānī was a traditional scholar in the true sense of the term and was highly respected in scholarly and religious circles in Tehran, Qom, and Mashhad. Like his teacher and mentor, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭaba'ī, he was a student of the school of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī, and respected Iranian philosophers of previous centuries, particularly such thinkers as Ibn Sīnā, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, Mullā Ṣadrā, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kashanī, and Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī. Frequently in his writings, Ṭihrānī refers to those thinkers and philosophers. Ṭihrānī was also a Gnostic of high station and remarkable spiritual accomplishment and was greatly

[1] For a detailed account of his life, see my "Introduction" in Sayyid Mohammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭaba'ī, *Risālah-yi Lubb al-Lubāb dar Sayr wa Sulūk-i Ulul'albab, translated and annotated* by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Spiritual Wayfaring and Journeying of the People of Intellect*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

influenced and inspired by masters like Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ, ibn Fārid, Fakhr al-Dīn Iraqi, and others. He was pious, sincere, and humble, and of a noble character.

In addition, Ṭihrānī was an exemplary teacher, an eloquent speaker, and a prolific writer. He wrote on a variety of exoteric and esoteric Islamic sciences, including metaphysics. His writings are characterized by their lucidity, originality, fresh approach, and depth, and are indicative of his mastery of the Qur'an, Shī'ism, Sufism, and Persian and Arabic literature. His devotion to these Sufi poets and thinkers is well reflected in his writings, where he frequently presents relevant examples from their works. His writings are also indicative of the purity of his heart and of his faith, sincerity, and genuine yearning for knowledge and truth. His description of the realms beyond this world in this book is as graphic as if he were in fact writing about what he had seen and experienced.

To write a text that simultaneously deals with spiritual and metaphysical issues from philosophical, spiritual, legal, and theological perspectives at the same time is a daunting task. It requires not only the mastery of these subjects, but also a profound understanding of and intimacy with life and death and beyond. The discourses presented in this book indeed demonstrate the depth and scope of Ṭihrānī's knowledge, and as another scholar has stated, "Ṭihrānī exemplifies a case of a whole category of Islamic writers going back to Fārābi, Ibn Sīnā and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī for whom extension of breadth did not mean in any sense the loss of depth."[2] Indeed, his presence is still felt strongly in the intellectual and spiritual circles in Mashhad two decades after his departure from this world.

Translation of a text of this caliber into a Western language is a demanding undertaking and an arduous task, especially if we take into consideration that the discourses were originally

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[2] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Preface" to *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journeying of the People of Intellect (Risālah-yi Lubb al-Lubāb dar Sayr wa Sulūk-i Ulul'albab)*, translated and annotated by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp. xviii–xix.

presented orally. Making the text translatable into English required first producing a summary, as well as a great deal of editing. This task would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of several scholars and friends. I am eternally indebted for the support and encouragement of Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who generously extended to me his friendship and guidance and encouraged me to complete the project.

Special thanks are due to my dear friend, Dr. Abbas Lotfipour of Mashhad, under whose supervision the original 10 volumes of *Ma'ād Shenāsī* were summarized in 75 chapters, totaling nearly 600 pages. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Lotfipour for his support, without which this project would have been impossible to undertake.

Several young scholars collaborated with me in the process of translation. Nicholas Boylstone of Harvard University translated chapters 2 through 5 (20 pages). Mohammad Reza Hemyari, a graduate student and my teaching assistant in the religion department at The George Washington University (2011–2013), translated chapters 35 through 40 (48 pages). Another friend and colleague, Dr. Hasan Akhlaq Husayni, a visiting scholar at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., translated chapters 24 through 32 (about 60 pages). In all three cases, however, I had to make extensive revisions and corrections throughout and in certain cases retranslate some sections because of the difficult nature and style of the text and especially the frequent use of technical terms. I am very grateful for their effort and assistance. The translation of the rest of the chapters is my own.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to Ms. Abigail Tardiff, who read and thoroughly edited the entire manuscript. I do appreciate her impressive accuracy, professionalism, and punctuality and am grateful for her constructive comments and her attention to detail. She made invaluable editorial suggestions and prepared the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Translations of Qur'anic verses in this book are taken from A. J. Arberry (*The Koran Interpreted*).[3] Occasionally I also consulted Marmaduke Pickthall's translation (*The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*).[4] In translating technical terms I have benefited greatly from works of other scholars and have mentioned the original Arabic terms in parentheses whenever necessary. Transliteration of Arabic terms and names is done in accordance with the Table of Transliteration. Extensive annotations are supplied to provide information about individuals, events, places, and terms. I must add that because of the large size of the abridged version, it was decided to have the final book published in two volumes. Volume One includes 40 chapters, and the remaining 35 chapters will be published next year in Volume Two.

None of the scholars and friends mentioned above, however, is responsible for any errors or shortcomings in the translation of the text. The responsibility for all such errors is solely my own.

Wa-min Allāh al-tawfīq wa-'alayhil-taklān.
Mohammad H. Faghfoory
Washington, D.C.
August 15, 2015
Mordād 24, 1394
Shawwal 29, 1436

[3] A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

[4] Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, London, 1930, reprinted in Tehran, 1352/1973.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The First Discourse

Truth and Contingencies

Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and greetings to our Master, Muhammad, and his immaculate Household. *There is no power nor strength save in God, Exalted and Majestic is He.*

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *By the fig and the olive and the Mount Sinai and this land secure! We indeed created Man in the fairest stature, then We restored him the lowest of the low, save those who believe, and do righteous deeds; they shall have a wage unfailing. What then shall cry thee lies as to the Doom? Is not God the justest of judges?*[5]

In this blessed verse, God says that He created man in the best possible stature. Then, He placed him in a station that is the lowest of the low. He became immersed in the darkness of the material world and alienated from the abode of divine Knowledge and intimacy [with God]. God placed man in this station and granted him the ability to choose to turn away from it. He granted man the possibility of attaining proximity to God, of reaching the highest possible station, and of receiving a reward from Him. In fact, among all existent things only the human being has this special honor and quality, thanks to his [God-given] intellect and faculty of perception. This quality gives man a special honor and privilege in creation as a result of which he enjoys the possibility of ascending the highest abodes of heaven and the realm of detachment, where sacred intellective souls (*nufūs-e qudsīyah 'aqlānīyah*) reside.

The universal divine law of creation has demonstrated that God has bestowed on all creatures, even invisible particles, the blessing of life, knowledge, and power. In fact, existence

[5] Qur'an 95: 105.

necessitates these three qualities. Ultimately every existent thing, from inanimate things to plants and animals, human beings, and angels, each possesses life, knowledge, and power in accordance with its capacity.

For instance, the degree of animals' knowledge and discernment is limited to their ability to seek what is in their interest and repel that which may be harmful. Their actions do not extend beyond eating and procreation and the fulfillment of other basic physical needs. Their world is limited, and they do not step beyond this realm.

In contrast, among all existent things it is the human being alone who possesses contradictory faculties and certain instincts. As a result of these qualities, he is constantly engaged in a struggle against the passions and desires of the carnal soul, which pull him in different directions. The presence of contingent affairs (*i'tibariyyāt*) in human life expands the field of his activities in all aspects of life. The reality of the human being, therefore, is intertwined with a number of contingencies and expediencies, such as love for fame, fulfillment of desires of the carnal soul, and other illusive aspects of life, such as superiority/inferiority, wealth or poverty, love of power and status, love of accumulation of wealth, and the like. This has resulted in human beings' engagement in a series of activities at the price of his love for the Truth.

Naturally attraction to these contingent affairs distances man from the realm of meaning and Truth, and prevents him from reaching his destination. For example, food is a simple reality of life and a means of human survival. However, when one intends to feed friends for the sake of considerations such as gaining recognition and reputation and status (i.e. contingencies), this simple reality of life turns into a difficult affair. Often these contingencies dominate over the reality to such an extent that all other aspects of life are determined by the contingencies. Man's preoccupation with contingencies or expediencies often leads to his destruction and death.

This realm of contingencies is [what the Qur'an calls] the lowest of the low (*asfal-al-ṣafilīn*), that is, the lowest realm and

the realm farthest from reality and Truth. Thus, man, who is on a journey towards perfection and who must reach the truth and come into harmony with it and attain a high status, declines to such a degree that his knowledge, intellect, power, or wealth—in short, his life—are wasted in the fulfilment of his wishes and desires and the protection of his reputation and fame. Eventually, without the benefit of God-given bounties, his life comes to an end, and he dies empty-handed and filled with remorse.

Religions have come from God to teach man the principles that will guide him to felicity and eternal life, and to introduce those contingent affairs that are useful for his perfection and identify those that are harmful. Those who observe and act upon these principles actualize all their God-given potentialities and reach perfection. Such human beings do not fear death, for they understand the mysteries of the world and connect to their Lord. They immerse themselves in divine Knowledge and annihilate their own existence in God's existence. These men are not afraid of death but indeed love it and are anxious to witness its mysterious world. In contrast, those who do not observe their religious duties are prisoners in their own contingent world, for they are preoccupied with illusive and unreal affairs that present themselves in the guise of the truth. They become deprived of the life-giving blessings of the realm of Truth and of intimacy with God. They fail to understand the purpose of creation and never know where their real home is. Inevitably, their journey to the other world is accompanied by weakness. They leave this world unfulfilled and in sadness and regret. As God says in the Qur'an, they

> *...are men whom neither commerce nor trafficking diverts from the remembrance of God and the performance of prayer, and the payment of alms, fearing a day when hearts and eyes shall be turned about, that God may recompense them for their fairest works and give them increase of His bounty; and God provides whomsoever He will, without reckoning. And as for the unbelievers, their works are as a mirage in a spacious plain which the man athirst supposes*

to be water, till, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing; there indeed he finds God, and He pays him his account in full; and God is swift at the reckoning.[6]

One must reflect on these verses to understand how God describes the light of the faith in the heart of the believers, and how He likens the infidel's failure to a mirage in an open field where he runs for water in a dry desert and never finds it to quench his thirst. As a result, without removing any of the numerous imperfections from his soul, he dies and stands before God for reckoning, shameful and embarrassed; for he was preoccupied with increasing his wealth, power, and status more than with the Truth. Thus he has distanced himself from God and immersed himself in fulfilling his illusive wishes and desires, and the mirage has become his grave. The Qur'an eloquently describes this state in the following verses:

Know that the present life is but a sport and a diversion, an adornment and a cause for boasting among you, and a rivalry in wealth and children. It is as a rain whose vegetation pleases the unbelievers; then it withers, and thou seest it turning yellow, then it becomes broken orts. And in the world to come there is a terrible chastisement, and forgiveness from God and good pleasure; and the present life is but the joy of delusion.[7]

According to this verse, man can live in one of five states that are lower than the state of the beasts: vain play in which the desires of the carnal soul have no role; idle talk in which the carnal soul dominates and logic and reason have no role; seeing contingent and false affairs in the garb of the truth; selfishness and boasting; and finally constantly struggling to earn more wealth.

[6] Qur'an 24: 37–39.
[7] Qur'an 57: 20.

In a subtle statement Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn 'Āmili[8] says that God has categorized these five states in accordance with the stages of one's life. The first state corresponds to childhood and adolescence and the time of play and physical activities, followed by the period of puberty and young adulthood, when one's appetite and passion reach their peak. This corresponds with the second state. During the midlife years one turns to establishing one's fame and status, and finally as one gets older, one becomes greedy to earn more wealth.

As man moves towards old age, he becomes more covetous. Although he spent his resources on the path of God while he was young, he no longer does so as he gets older. He was charitable when he was younger but he is no longer willing to share his wealth. As the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "As the son of man gets older two traits also get older along with him and they are greed and attachment to the worldly desires (*tool al-amal*).

This is in human nature. In the same way that a person grows older, so will be the form of his soul, and things he has learned will become second nature for him. If someone does not raise his soul in accordance with the *Sharī'ah* and the truth, towardd the end of life he will see the consequences for his soul.

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[8] Muhammad ibn Ḥusayn Jabal al-'Āmili, known as Shaykh Bahā'i, was a noble descendent of Ḥārith Ḥamadānī, and a close companion of 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib. He was born in 953/1546 in Ba'labak [Lebanon], and passed away in the year 1030/1621 in Isfahan. His many books and treatises include his commentaries on the Qur'an known as *'Urwat al-Wuthqā'*, *Ḥadīqat al-Hilālīyah*, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, *Kashkūl*, and *Jāmi'-i 'Abbāsī*. More information on his life and works is available in the following primary sources: see Shaykh 'Abbās Qumī *Hidyat al-Aḥbāb*, p. 109, *al-Rawā'id al-Raḍawīyah*, pp. 502–520, *Mīzān al-Ṣawāb*, p. 547, *Tadhkirat al-Ṣālikīn*, pp. 24 and 33, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, 7:56–84, *Majma' al-Fuṣaḥā*, 4:12, and *Risālah al-Tashwīq al-Sālikīn*, pp. 14–15, as quoted in Muhammad 'Ali Mu'adhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfah-yi 'Abbasī: The Golden Chain of Sufism in Shī'ite Islam*, Translated from Persian by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2007, pp. 38.

It is indeed the result of an inappropriate manner of training of one's soul without consideration for God's command that one becomes greedier and increasingly attached to the world as one gets older. However, true believers (*mu'minīn*) whose faith in God is sound and who rest their hearts in His eternal abode always base their lives on beautiful deeds, justice, and fairness. Their reward is with God, and they will enjoy it continuously and forever. As the Qur'an says, *"except those that believe, and do righteous deeds—theirs shall be a wage unfailing."*[9] In other words, their reward is endless and they will eternally enjoy the best bounties of God in the Hereafter:

> *Whosoever does an evil deed shall be recompensed only with the like of it, but whosoever does a righteous deed, be it male or female, believing—those shall enter Paradise, therein provided without reckoning.*[10]

God uses these five-fold states, which are like mirages and lack truth, as a metaphor to warn man that the period of vain play, boasting, accumulation of wealth and children, and the like are all perishable. Like green grass that grows quickly in the field after heavy rain and surprises us, but that dies and becomes like a dry desert as a result of a quick drought, so the energy and beauty of the youthful years and the pride of beauty, charm, and majesty will all be destroyed by the storm of life, and nothing will remain of them.

This is the example of the world in which knowledge, power, wealth, and other human possessions grow, and all potentialities reach their peak and then begin to weaken and decline, and all those qualities disappear. Then weakness and fatigue threaten man from every direction and gradually place him on the verge of death and departure from the world of nature.

However, we must know that this is not the last stage of life, and life does not end here. Rather, *"And in the world to come*

[9] Qur'an 84: 25.
[10] Qur'an 40: 40.

there is a terrible chastisement, and forgiveness from God and good pleasure; and the present life is but the joy of delusion.[11]

In the Hereafter, which is the abode of the Truth, people are divided into two groups. One group is the one that was content in this world with contingent affairs and transient pleasures and outward joys. The people in this group did not experience divine attractions in the world and did not realize that the world was nothing more than an illusion. Therefore, they will be deprived of rewards in the Hereafter. The result of immersion in temporary pleasures, violations of justice, failure in servanthood to God, disobedience from the commands of religion, and reliance on and obedience to the carnal soul is nothing but chastisement in the Hereafter.

The second group includes people who, while living in this world, were also conscious of the Hereafter and considered this world as a bridge to the eternal world. By connecting to God in the hope of witnessing the beauty of their Lord, they spent their lives and power to reach God. The result of and reward for their steadfastness, persistence, and sincerity is nothing other than God's pleasure, His paradise, and the blessing of experiencing God's Names and Attributes and earning His forgiveness.

The late 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī[12] (may God have mercy on his soul) interpreted the above verse and stated that this world has an outward and an inward aspect and dimension. The Hereafter is in fact the inward dimension

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[11] Qur'an 57: 20.

[12] 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī was born in Tabrīz in 1345/1926 in the province of Azerbaijan into a family of scholars and descendants of the Prophet. He received his early education in in Tabrīz and continued his study in Najaf for 12 years and returned to Iran in 1314 solar/1934. He began to teach and write in Qom, where he died in 1359/1981. His most important books include the monumental commentary on the Qur'an in 25 volumes, *al-Mīzān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, *Lubb al-Lubāb dar Sayr-o-Sulūk-i 'Ulu'l al-bāb*, *Qur'an dar Islam*, *Bidāyat al-Hikmah*, and *Nihāyat al-Hikmah*, and many other treatises. Many of his books have been translated into English and other European languages.

of this world. The evidence of the validity of his interpretation, as he mentioned, is that the above verse is immediately followed by the following verse:

> *Race to forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden the breadth whereof is as the breadth of heaven and earth, made ready for those who believe in God and His Messengers. That is the bounty of God: He gives it unto whomsoever He will: and God is of bounty abounding.*[13]

On the basis of this interpretation, therefore, we can conclude that it is possible to race to forgiveness and paradise in this world if man centers his acts in accordance with the demands of the Hereafter.

A believer and a non-believer both share the same worldly affairs. However, a believer looks deeper into the reality of things and arrives at a different conclusion than does a non-believer, who only sees the outward aspect of things and arrives at conclusions accordingly. The difference is like that between night and day, between one who is asleep and one who is awake and conscious. The non-believer acts in accordance with the necessities of the five states described earlier, whereas the believer acts in order to please God and enjoy His mercy. If he helps the poor, he does so for God's pleasure. Such were the actions of the Commander of the Faithful ('Ali), who always acted with God in mind. If he did something, it was for God's sake and His pleasure. Other people may act for insignificant objectives. 'Ali acted because he believed in the nobility and sanctity of the act itself. These two criteria differentiate a believer from a non-believer.

The path of the believer is the path of truth because it is based on faith in the nobility and principiality of spirit and meaning and on reliance on God, whereas the path of the non-believer rests on the commands of the carnal soul, transient pleasures, passions, and deceiving ornaments, like an old and ugly woman who tries to beautify herself with cosmetics to look

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[13] Qur'an 57: 21.

young. All her ornaments in fact prevent her inner beauty from manifesting itself; that is to say, a contingent act diverts our attention from that which is real to that which is unreal and fake. Therefore, adornment is a trap to distract attention from the truth to false beauties. This is precisely what pride means; it makes contingent affairs and transient things look real. A man becomes attached to and in fact falls in love with these ugly and short-lived forms to the extent that he loses his soul for nothing in return. A real man, a man of faith, however, does not lose his assets to such a trap that is laid in his way.

> *We have appointed all that is on the earth for an adornment for it, and that We may try which of them is fairest in works; and We shall surely make all that is on it barren dust.*[14]

God has placed everything that we see in this world, from prime matter/*hyle* (*hayūlā*) to all material things, as a means of testing and trying human beings to see who will not be deceived by worldly attractions and who will not violate the primordial rules of servanthood [to God]; who will follow the command of intellect and ethics, and whose conduct will be righteous and generous. These qualities are all prerequisites of realizing the truth.

In sermon number 155, the Commander of the Faithful ('Ali) says:

> He who preoccupies his soul with other than his own soul will be lost in bewilderment and will fall into the valley of destruction. Devils will keep him long in his rebellion, and the ugliness of his acts will seem beautiful to him. Paradise will be the abode of those who avoid worldly adornment and do not rebel, and they are the foremost among believers (*al-Sābiqīn*). And fire of hell is the abode of evil-doers and sinners.
>
> This world is the abode of pride and destruction. Its life is a moment and then we must say farewell to it. People come

[14] Qur'an 18: 7–8.

and go between its two gates. When their trace disappears from it, they become history.

The ultimate end of any moving thing is silence, and the final state of every being is annihilation. So if this is the case, why should someone rush towards his own annihilation? Know that man desires the world for three things: power, wealth, and comfort. He who is content with his lot is always free of these needs, and he who tries less hard to win the world, is more at peace.

Religions are sent from God to remind man who he actually is, to tell him that he is not separated from other creatures in the universe but is connected to all and to God. We are a part of the totality of the world of existence and have come to this world and live in it for a purpose, and will go to another world from here. *May God Have mercy on him who knows where he came from, where he lives, and where he shall go from here.*

It is narrated that whenever the Commander of the Faithful recited verse 36 of chapter 75 of the Qur'an, he shed tears and lamented and constantly repeated the verse (*"What, does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will?"*).[15]

All the blessings of God that come from the invisible world are bestowed upon a person who does not consider his life on earth a vain play and meaningless, but believes that he was appointed by God for a mission that he must dedicate himself to fulfill with love so that he will earn God's pleasure and ascend the highest plane of His paradise (*riḍwān*).

When the Angel of Death comes to capture a believer's soul and sees him reluctant to depart this world for the Hereafter because of his attachment to children, family, and relatives, he returns to God and reports the reason for the man's reluctance. The angel is commanded to write on the palm of his hand, "In the Name of God, the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate" (*Bismi 'lLah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*) and show the man. The angel does as he is commanded and shows his

[15] Qur'an 75: 36.

palm to the believing man. Suddenly, the man of faith finds himself in the middle of paradise and does not even feel the coming of his death. This is the state of a believer and a man of faith. As to the state of a non-believer, we take refuge in God. Such a man has spent his life in the opposite direction of God's command and has wasted his life in search of worldly possessions, has forgotten the Merciful God, and has befriended God's enemies. At the time of death each of these attachments acts like a metal chain hanging from his heart and pulling him towards itself. He has a thousand kinds of attachments and a thousand chains. How can one leave easily in such a state? If all his cells are torn apart, he will not want to go willingly. It is here that he hears the call addressing him and taking him to the darkness of the unknown abode, as the Qur'an says, "*Take him, and fetter him, and then fetter him in Hell.*"[16]

[16] Qur'an 69: 30–31.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Second Discourse

Temporary Life and Eternal Life

They know an appearance of the worldly life and are negligent of the Hereafter. Do they not think to themselves, God did not create the heavens and the earth (and all existents) save by truth and with a destined end? And verily many of the people deny the meeting with their Lord.[17]

Since in the first verse the outward aspect (*ẓāhir*) of the worldly life is contrasted with the Hereafter, it can be understood that the Hereafter is the hidden and inward aspect (*bāṭin*) and the reality of this world (just as was understood from verse 20 of chapter 57 in the first discourse). The addition of the second verse is evidence for this view, for the creation of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them on the basis of the *truth* and a *known end* is precisely the reality of this world. People often forget this reality and are content with the appearance of this world and ignore the Hereafter and the meeting with God.

Indeed, from many of the verses of the Glorious Qur'an it can be understood that the creation of the heavens, the earth, and what they contain, including man, has a determined end (*ajal-i musammā*), and with the arrival of this cycle their era comes to a close.But [the question is], what are the rules that command the existence of everything other than the heavens and the earth and the beings that exist therein? Are they also subject to annihilation and demise? There is no verse in the Qur'an that explains the quality of their origin and end explicitly and in detail. However, there are a few blessed verses

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[17] Qur'an 30: 7–8.

from which their permanence and everlasting nature can be deduced: "*All that is with you is bound to come to an end, whereas that which is with God is everlasting.*"[18] and also, "*And there is not a thing but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down save in appointed measure.*"[19]

These two verses make it understood that the realities of beings in this world have their treasure houses with God, Most High, which are permanent and everlasting and are not subject to annihilation and non-existence. It can also be deduced from the verses under discussion that the beings of that world were created in truth as well and with an appointed term themselves. Yet, they are not subject to an appointed term, nor are they subject to time and space: otherwise it would make them subject to an infinite regress. They are beyond the appointed term and not subject to the gradual passing of time, as we shall explain in subsequent discussions, God willing.

The perfection of humans and other beings of the world of nature is such that they must perfect themselves within a known time and a limited and destined term, and they cannot leave the sphere of time, nor bring forward or delay their appointed term. Beings of the world of nature can never escape from the universal law of the world of nature—that is the law of demise and annihilation—nor from time, and reach permanence and eternity, for they possess matter and nature. This truth is understood from explicit Qur'anic verses. As far as human beings are concerned, the Qur'an states: "*And every nation hath its term, and when its term cometh, they cannot put it off an hour nor yet advance (it).*"[20] And likewise this verse: "*...no community can ever forestall [the end of] its term—and neither can they delay [it].*"[21]

The issue of death is one of the most difficult questions [of human existence]. Many individuals from every walk of life over many centuries have endeavored with all their material,

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[18] Qur'an 16: 96.
[19] Qur'an 12: 51.
[20] Qur'an 7: 34.
[21] Qur'an 15: 5.

spiritual, and intellectual powers, and have expended all of their spiritual will and strength, to solve this enigma so that mankind might live in this world forever and not endure the horrifying wait for death. They have not succeeded.

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, may God's greetings be upon him, on the very day in which he was struck with his deathblow, delivered a sermon in which he said:

> O People, every man shall meet that which he flees from. Life is the very timespan during which man walks towards his appointed time (*ajal*) and death. Fleeing from death is indeed walking towards it and meeting it. I spent many days trying to discover the secrets of this issue. God kept it hidden from me. Far from our access, this is a knowledge hidden in [God's] treasure house.

It is strange how by fleeing from death man brings himself nearer to death. How often in order to avoid death someone consults a doctor who makes a mistake that results in his death. There are many examples of this kind. Indeed, man endeavors at all moments to preserve his own existence and to flee from death. This is a human instinct. Even while asleep one has a sense of self-preservation. However, in reality every moment one brings himself closer to death, and in every activity in which the passage of time is beyond human volition, moment by moment he welcomes his death and continuously approaches it. This is why our Master [Ali] said, "To flee from it is to go towards it and get closer to it." This point has been expressed beautifully by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in the first book of the *Mathnawī* in the form of the story of the man who fled from death and took refuge with Solomon.[22]

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[22] Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi, *Mathnawī*, I, p. 22, edited by Mohammad Ramazani, Tehran: Kalāleh-ye Khāvar, 5th edition, 1366/1987. Translation by Ronald Nicholson, *Introduction to Rumi*, edited by Ovaness Ovanessian, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1350/1971, pp. 96–97.

ساده مردی چاشتگاهی در رسید   در سرا عدل سلیمان در دوید
رویش از غم زرد و هر دو لب کبود   پس سلیمان گفت ای خواجه چه بود
گفت عزرائیل در من این چنین   یک نظر انداخت پر از خشم و کین
گفت هین اکنون چه می‌خواهی بخواه   گفت فرما باد را ای جان پناه
تا مرا زینجا به هندستان برد   بوکه بنده کان طرف شد جان برد
نک ز درویشی گریزانند خلق   لقمهٔ حرص و امل زانند خلق
ترس درویشی مثال ان هراس   حرص و کوشش را تو هندستان شناس
باد را فرمود تا او را شتاب   برد سوی قعر هندستان بر اب
روز دیگر وقت دیوان و لقا   شه سلیمان گفت عزرائیل را
کان مسلمان را بخشم از چه سبب   بنگریدی بازگو ای پیک رب
ای عجب این کرده باشی بهر ان   تا شود اواره او از خان و مان
من ورا از خشم کی کردم نظر   از تعجب دیدمش در رهگذر
که مرا فرمود حق کامروز هان   جان او را تو بهندستان ستان
از عجب گفتم گر او را صد پرست   زو به هندستان شدن دور اندرست
تو همه کار جهان را همچنین   کن قیاس و چشم بگشا و ببین
از کی بگریزیم از خود ای محال   از کی برباییم از حق ای وبال

At morn. to Solomon in his hall of justice
A simple suitor came. running in haste.
His countenance pale with anguish. his lips blue.
Then he. "What ails. thee. Khwajah?" asked the King.
"'Twas Azrael—ah. such a look he cast

On me of rage and vengeance." "Come now. ask
What boon thou wilt." "Protector of our lives.
I pray thee. bid the Wind convey me straight
To Hindustan: thy servant. there arrived.
Shall peradventure save his soul from Death."

How folk do ever flee from dervishhood
Into the jaws of greed and idle hope!
Your fear of dervishhood is that doomed man's terror.
Greed and ambition are your Hindustan.

Solomon bade the Wind transport him swiftly
Over the sea to farthest Hindustan.

On the morrow. when the King in audience sat.
He said to Azrael. "Wherefore didst thou look
Upon that Musulman so wrathfully
His home knew him no more?" "Nay not in wrath."
Replied the Angel. "did I look on him:
But seeing him pass by. I stared in wonder.

The word *ajal* has two meanings: first, it means duration and time (or "term"). When we say that the *ajal* of so-and-so is 50 years, it means that the duration of his life is this amount. When the Qur'an says, "*Every nation hath its term* (ajal),"[23] it denotes this meaning. Second, it can mean the culmination or the end of a duration. The *ajal* of a debt it the time at which that debt must be repaid. "*And when its term (ajal) cometh*"[24] connotes this meaning, for which the Arabic word *mī'ād* is also used: "*Say: 'There has been appointed (m'ād) for you a Day which you can neither delay nor advance by a single moment.*"[25]

There is a subtle point to be found in the verses of the Qur'an that is most worthy of attention: One verse states, "*He it is Who hath created you from clay, and hath decreed a term (ajal) for you. A term (ajal) is fixed (musammā) with Him.*"[26]

It is therefore to be understood from this verse that we have two kinds of "terms" (*ajal*). One term is that which God has determined for us, and another one is the "appointed term" that is "with God." On the one hand, according to the verse "*all that is with you is bound to come to an end, whereas that which is with God is everlasting,*"[27] we know that that which is with us is transient and that which is with God is permanent; thus since the "appointed term" is "with God," it is certainly one of those things that is everlasting and shall not be subject to annihilation

For God had bidden me take his soul that day
In Hindustan. I stood there marvelling.
Methought, even if he had a hundred wings,
'Twere far for him to fly to Hindustan."

Judge all things of the world by this same rule
And open your eyes and see! Away from whom
Shall we fly headlong? From ourselves ? Absurd!
From God, then? Oh, the vain and woeful crime!"

[23] Qur'an 7: 34.
[24] Qur'an 7: 34.
[25] Qur'an 34: 30.
[26] Qur'an 6: 2 (partially quoted).
[27] Qur'an 16: 96.

and non-existence. Therefore, the duration of our lives shall come to an end, but the "appointed term" remains forever.

This discussion thus explains the quality of these two types of terms (*ajal*), the difference between them, and why one is transient and the other permanent and everlasting. In order to give this issue due consideration let us turn to the Qur'an:

> *The similitude of the life of the world is only as water which We send down from the sky, then the earth's growth of that which men and cattle eat mingleth with it till, when the earth hath taken on her ornaments and is embellished, and her people deem that they are masters of her, Our commandment cometh by night or by day and we make it as reaped corn as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We expound the revelations for people who reflect."*[28]

In this verse God says that human life in this world is like water that falls from the sky and makes the earth verdant, and the inhabitants of the earth suppose that all of their power on the earth has suddenly been consolidated and there is no longer anything that could take from them this abundance of luxury and merriment. That is to say: cold, lifeless sperm takes its place in the furnace of the loins of the father and is then placed in the womb of the mother; in optimal warmth it passes the term of its development in the womb and then comes into the world and goes after knowledge, power, status, wealth, progeny, and numerous other entifications (*ta'ayyunāt*) and contingent affairs (*i'tibariyyāt*), so that in all respects this individual becomes knowledgeable, experienced, discerning, and insightful and gains power over the earth in all of his activities. To put it simply, he reaches the height of his powers as far as worldly life is concerned, when all of a sudden, at the very moment, when it would not occur to him that he may die, he encounters death. The Angel of Death, (Isrā'īl) comes to him and rolls up the scroll of his life in such a way that all mementoes of him are cast to the wind of annihilation—*"as if*

[28] Qur'an 10: 24.

it had not flourished yesterday."[29] It is as if such a person had never abided on the earth and had never even existed.

In this blessed verse God says, *"Our commandment cometh by night or by day and brings an end to life."*[30] So it is clear that the end of life in this world is at the command of God, and God's Command belongs to God alone and is "with God"; this is the appointed term (*ajal-i musammā*). So the vanishing of life and the coming of (the end of) the term is based on the "appointed term" and the Divine Command. When the appointed term comes it brings an end to the term of life and there is no reprieve for man by any means.

In this way the nature of the two "terms" (*ajal*) becomes clear: the temporal and this-worldly term is the duration constituting the period of human life, which passes with the passage of time. It is gradual in nature and eventually comes to an end; with the death of the individual its duration finishes. The "appointed term" is the term "with God" and the Divine Command, which is not within the temporal world nor subject to destruction, but rather is eternally "with God" and is unchanging. It is on the basis of the appointed term that the this-worldly term is established.

For example, in the process of all activities, the past is turned into the present and the present also passes, and moment by moment time elapses until the last moment of the term arrives. This is precisely the day of the appointed time (*mī'ād wa mīqāt*).

As for the appointed term (*ajal-i musammā*), it is fixed and is the deadline of human life, which from the first to the last has been determined in the spiritual, celestial world, [the world] in which there is no remittal or passing, and upon which the essential foundation and the stability of the temporal and worldly lifespan is laid. The appointed term (*ajal-i musammā*) is in a world more extensive than this world, that is, the celestial world, upon which basis all of the beings of the world of nature descend and come into existence. That world is the template

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[29] Qur'an 10: 24.
[30] Qur'an 10: 24.

and the reality, and this world is similitude (*mithāl*), instance (*nemūneh*), and metaphor. And this very passing of life that here, from the point of view of the gradation (*tadrīj*) of matter, we see to be perishable and limited, if we look with a higher level of understanding and perception or by sensation (*bi 'l-ḥiss*) and witnessing (*mushāhadah*) perceive the celestial world, we will find the fixed appointed term to exist there and to be permanent, and we will never find it to be subject to annihilation and disappearance. The evidence for this idea is the verse that states, *"For those whose hopes are in the meeting with Allah (in the Hereafter let them strive): for the Term of Allah is surely coming."*[31]

The "Term of Allah" is precisely the appointed term and the Divine Command. That is to say, those who hope for a meeting with the Lord must reach the celestial world and must comprehend the appointed term and its characteristics from origin to end, or must pass beyond the term of this world by voluntary (*ikhtiyārī*) death or involuntary (*iḍṭirarī*) death and reach the celestial world, for to meet God without traversing the celestial world and perceiving the permanent realities such as the appointed term is impossible. To put it otherwise, it can be said that the appointed term and the worldly term are one reality that is seen in two ways and on two planes: one plane is the world of nature and matter that is the transient life (*'umr-i gozarān*), and the other plane is the celestial, permanent world that is the way of passage towards the Names and Attributes of the Loving Lord, and ultimately towards annihilation in the Holy Essence of the Lord. The appointed term that is in the celestial world will be one of the waystations on the way to arriving at that hope, which is precisely the meeting with God. The verses in the Glorious Qur'an that indicate the Return of everything including man towards God are many.[32] Death is the Return of the human soul, the coming to an end of the term of this world, the arrival at the appointed term, and the transition

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[31] Qur'an 29: 5.

[32] See for instance Qur'an 42: 53, 24: 42, 35: 4, 11: 123, 96: 8, 5: 48, and 5: 105.

from the sensory, material world to the world of archetype and form. Of course the reality of death is not something sensory such that it could be perceived with the senses, because the senses themselves belong to nature and matter, and death, which is the transition from matter, cannot be apprehended by them.

Avicenna, Master of the Masters, in his treatise *The Cure for Fear of Death* (*al-Shifā' min khawf al-mawt*), makes certain points about the reality of death and the cause of fear of it, which we shall here summarize:

The reality of death consists of this: that the human soul, which is a non-corporeal substance, abandons its instruments of action, that is to say the body. Since the soul is not an accident such that it could accept corruption and decay after separation from the body, it subsists in a manner that is appropriate to it and is purified of the darkness (*kudurāt*) of the world of nature. This is because a substance, insofar as it is a substance, is not annihilated; its essence is not invalidated, and that which is invalidated is precisely its accidents and specific characteristics and those relations that are the connection between it and bodies. As for spiritual substances, they never undergo transformation and only receive perfections and the completion of their own form, so how is it conceivable that they should be destroyed and become non-existent? As for him who fears death, the cause is either that he does not know to where he is returning, or that he supposes that with the dissolution of the body and its composition his soul and his reality will also be invalidated, and as such he is ignorant of the subsistence (*baqā'*) of his soul and of the nature of the Return (*Ma'ād*). Thus the real cause of fear of death is ignorance, and therefore those scholars (the *'ūlamā'*) on the path of the search for knowledge and the acquisition of wisdom and apprehension keep their distance from the pleasures of the body and endure hardships.[33]

[33] Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna: 359–416/980–1038): Born in Ḥamadān and passed away in Bukhara, he is the most prominent Iranian-Muslim philosopher,

On the basis of this fact, death causes neither anxiety nor horror for the Gnostic and the wakeful believer who has not taken a step against the Truth, who has harmonized his words and deeds with the Truth, who has turned his back to the realm of pride in this world and has abstained from the world, and for him who has set his inclinations and aspirations on the abode of permanence (*khulūd*) and eternity, and loves the meeting with God. Rather, since he loves God and believes in His Oneness (*faradnīyat*), he loves death, detachment [from the world] and the meeting with God. Each day he longs to cast off the robes of the body and be enshrouded in the light of detachment (*tajarrud*). He strives continuously so that each day a degree of his vanity and unreality (*majāz*) will be decreased and he will approach a degree nearer to the apprehension of meaning and truth, until he reaches the stage at which all worldly and transitory affairs are buried in a mirage of nullity and non-existence, and the manifestation of the world of lights and reality has become actualized (*mutaḥaqqiq*) for him.

Indeed for people who, as a result of their immersion in the material world and passion, have been distanced from detachment of the carnal soul, and who have failed to know their Lord, death causes terror because of their unfamiliarity and lack of intimacy with the abode of proximity to God. Their ignorance constantly keeps them fearful and anxious. God, Mighty and Glorious, addresses the Jews thus: "*Oh Prophet, say to the Jews (who for a time were people brought near to God and had sole possession of paradise and the Hereafter)...*[34]

That is to say, the performing of pious deeds and the refraining from transgressions against both the rights of others and the station of servanthood to God bring about a connection,

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physician, and scientist. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Avicenna and the Philosopher-Scientists," in S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, New York: Caravan Books, 3d. printing, 1997. See also Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

[34] Qur'an 2: 94–95. See also 62: 6-7.

an acquaintance, and an intimacy with God, and in the end result in love of the meeting with Him that comes about with death. Thus one must love death, for to love someone is to love the path that leads to the beloved. One who sets his heart on the world of vanity and regards the world of existence only through the eyes of concupiscence, anger, exploitation [of others], personal distinction, and unjust governance is immersed in ignorance itself; while he lives in the world of reality, he has become distanced from reality itself. He becomes far from God and does not submit to Him in the station of servanthood. Therefore, he is by no means a lover of God, and his claims are false. He will never become one of the friends of God (*awliyā'*), for a friend (*walī*) loves his master (*mawlā*). The Jews who claim that they are the eminent among the children of Adam, and in the Rising will not be burned by the fire save for a few days, and yet during the 40 days (of Moses's absence on Sinai) rebelled against his deputy, Aaron, and became cattle-worshipers, are false in this claim. For the effects of love are manifested and embodied in one's being and actions: action makes known one's qualities, essence, and way of thinking. They are in love with the world, are desirous of accumulating wealth and possessions, and are therefore in love with whatever road will lead them to their beloved, even it be the murder of [innocent] souls and the plunder of respectably earned belongings. They are in love with the life of the world of vanity, not with eternity.

It has been narrated from 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, that when it was time for the spirit of Abraham to be taken by the Divine Command, the Angel of Death appeared and said to him, "Peace be upon thee, O Abraham." Abraham said, "And upon thee be peace, O Angel of Death. Have you come to call [me to go voluntarily towards my Lord] or force me to drink the draught of death?" Isrā'īl said, "Voluntarily, so respond to the summons of thy God. Thy Lord hast called thee!" Abraham said, "Hast thou seen an intimate friend (*khalīl*) slay his intimate friend?" Isrā'īl returned to God, Mighty and Glorious, and stood in obedience and submission between the

two Hands of Majesty and Mercy, and then said, "O Lord! Hast Thou heard what Thy loving companion and intimate friend Abraham said?" The Lord God, exalted be His Majesty, said, "O Isrā'īl, go forth to Abraham and say, 'Hast thou seen a lover who despises the meeting with his beloved? Verily the lover loves the meeting with the beloved.'"[35]

The Commander of the Faithful, upon him be peace, then added, "By God, the son of Abū Ṭālib[36] is more intimate with death than an infant is with the breast of his mother."

'Ali made this statement in response to people such as Zubayr and Abū Sufyān, who instigated him to uprising after the passing away of the Messenger of God, upon him and his family be blessings and peace. This is because many of them had worldly intentions behind these instigations, and for this reason in his sermon he said,

> The circumstances suitable for divine governance have not yet arisen for me, nor has the way become even, like a morsel which becomes stuck in the throat or a fruit which is picked while not yet ripe. I shall not govern so as to take up the crown of glory (*mofakhirat*) and vanity of this world, nor will I become governor out of greed for rule. And neither are my silence and dissimulation (*taqīyah*) based on the fear of death.

Then he uttered the eloquent statement mentioned above, followed by these words, "But such hidden knowledge have I gained (and such secret realities have become intermingled with my very being) that if I were to reveal them you would tremble as long ropes in deep wells tremble."

The Commander of the Faithful's love of and desire for God made him eager for death, and his love of the meeting with God made him as intimate with death as is an infant with its mother's

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[35] As quoted in Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, VI, p. 127 (the narration is abridged).

[36] "The son of Abū Ṭālib" is the title 'Ali often uses when he talks about himself. See Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharh-i nahj al-balāghah*, vol. 1, pp. 218–219.

breast. And thus, when the sword of Ibn Muljam Murādi came down upon the crown of his head, he called out, “In the Name of God, by God, and upon the religion of the Prophet of God, by the Lord of the Ka’bah, I have been victorious.”

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Third Discourse

The Reason for Fear of Death

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present [this corrupt world of vanity], and those who heed not Our Signs, Their abode is the Fire, because of the (evil) they earned [through their qualities and actions].*[37]

Our previous discussion ended with the conclusion that death consists of the transition (*intiqāl*) of the human soul from the domain of this world and its attachment to matter to the Hereafter and the intermediary world of forms, and then on to the Greater Resurrection (*Qiyāmat-i kubrā*). This is because the human soul is not itself material, nor is it one of the effects of matter, but rather it is an immaterial and detached (*mujarrad*) substance, and a divine subtlety (*laṭifah-ye rabbānī*). Whether or not we say the origin of the creation of the spirit was from the immaterial world, and that of the body from the material world, the fact is that God brought the spirit down from the world above and gave it residence in the vessel of the body. The spirit has employed the organs of the body as tools for action, and at the moment of death [God] is like a craftsman who puts aside his tools. The Master of Masters, Abū 'Ali Sīnā (Avicenna), wrote his *Qasīdah 'aynīyah* on the basis of this conviction, although in other works such as the *Shifā'* and the *Najāt* he preferred the view of the simultaneity of the creation of the body and soul. In this poem composed in Arabic, the Shaykh says:

[37] Qur'an 10: 7–8.

It fell upon you [oh mankind], from that loftiest place,
That honeyed dove, possessing both exaltation and imperviousness
It is veiled from the eyes of all those sages,
[Veiled] though it sojourned but did not veil/yet unveiled.
It coupled with the loathed, [once it fell] upon you, and thereafter
Loathed your departure, thereafter bearing manifest sorrow.
It disdained and did not befriend, yet when [it coupled],
It dearly clung/grasped its confines of desolation and destitution.
And then it returns as a knower of all that was hidden
In all the cosmos. Yet its aperture did not fully repair.
And it is that which time rent asunder,
[So quickly] that it seemed to set without arising.
And it was as a spark that radiated in the sky,
And thereupon ended, as though it never shone.[38]

In this *Qasīdah*, the Master likens the spirit and rational soul of the human to a dove or high-flying bird (*raqa'*) with a majestic being and flying at an inaccessible height that has descended from its lofty nest to the cage of the body. He continues to say that although the spirit is unveiled before everyone's eyes, nonetheless it is hidden from the eyes of even the knowledgeable and the Gnostics. That subtle spirit established its connection with the earthly body with distaste and revulsion. What is strange is that after this attachment, it is

[38] Many commentaries are written on this poem. The text of the poem in its entirety with numerous commentaries is available in the entry on Ibn Sīnā in the *Lughat namah-ye dehkhodā*, Tehran: 1377/2008.

هبطت اليك من المحل الارفع   و رقاءذات تعزز و تمنع
محجوبه عن كل مقله عارف   و هي التي سفرت و لم تبزقع
وصلت علي كره اليك و ربما   كرهت فراقك و هي ذات تفجع
انفت و ما انست فلما واصلت   الفت مجاورة الخراب البلقع
....
....
و تعود عالمةبكل خفيه   في العالمين فخرقها لم يرفع
و هي التي قطع الزمان طريقها   حتي لقد غربت بغير المطلع
فكانها برق تالق بالحمي   ثم انطوي فكانه لم يلمع

no longer willing to leave the cage of the body, [and when it must do so] it goes into severe mourning. This rational soul was always in its proper station, preoccupied with itself, and had no connection with the material world whatsoever. However, as soon as it became united with the body, through the ties of companionship (*'alāqe-ye mujāvarat*) it became intimate with this dry wilderness.

Then in line 18 of the poem the Master explains that the rational soul eventually returns to its original station, though now it has become knowledgeable about all of the hidden matters of the world of existence. Therefore, not only have the ignominy (*dhillat*) of the fall and the degradation caused by it disappeared, but [the soul] has become intermingled with the light of knowledge of the secrets of creation in such a way that no trace of the fall is left in it, as though there were no fall at all in the first place: and never had it undergone the rupture so as to need mending.

As for line 19, this subtlety of the spirit (i.e. the soul) was waylaid by time: it came and went with such speed that even before the dawning and manifestation of its stations, and its perfections and degrees in this world, it fell behind the horizon [and left this world], such that without dawning it became hidden in dusk. This is what Avicenna believed about the creation of the spirit and the nature of its connection with and separation from the body.

Whether or not we say the existential principle (*aṣle-i takawwon*) of the rational soul was corporeal (and not from the immaterial world)[39] and as a result of trans-substantial motion

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[39] Mullā Ṣadrā, who was the first to propound this theory, said: "The soul is corporeal in origination and spiritual in its subsistence." (*al-nafs jismāniyyat al-ḥuduth wa ruḥānīyat al-baqā'*). On Mullā Ṣadrā see Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, *Sharh-i ḥāl va ārā-i falsafi-ye Mullā Ṣadrā*, Tehran, 1981; Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975, Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, Muhammad Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. See also,

(*ḥarakat-i jawharīyah*) and traversing the degrees and stations of ascent (*ma'ārej*) of perfection has become spiritual and assumed the form of an immaterial (*mujarrad*) being,[40] we might conceive of the soul as being similar to the stages of heating of a coal until it becomes luminous through proximity to fire. This holds true if we were to consider the soul from the perspective of motion and change (rather than static and actual states). Nevertheless, according to both of these theories, death consists in the transferal of the spirit from the body and its abandonment of matter and the effects of matter.

In his book *al-'Aqā'id* (*The Creeds*), Shaykh Ṣadūq[41] narrates the following statement from the noblest Messenger, may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny: "Thou wert not created for annihilation (*fanā'*), rather thou wert created for subsistence (*baqā'*), and thou art only transferred [through death] from one abode to another.

Likewise in *'Ilal al-Sharāyi'*, in the middle of a *ḥadīth* from Imām Ṣādiq, upon him be peace, it has been narrated:

> And so was the human created from the nature of this world [earth] and from the nature of the Hereafter [spirit]. When God did combine them it (spirit) came onto the earth. Since it hath descended from the nature of heaven to this world when God separateth them, that separation becometh death. The nature that came from the Hereafter is returned to heaven, for [physical] life is on the earth and death is in

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Hossein Ziai, "Mullā Ṣadrā: His Life and Work," and S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Ṣadrā: His Teachings." Both articles appeared in S. H. Nasr & Oliver Leaman (eds.) *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, pp. 635–642 and 643–662 respectively, London, 2001.

[40] 'Allāmah Ṭihrānī notes that both Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī and 'Aṭṭār held a similar position.

[41] Ṣadūq, known as Shaykh Ṣadūq ibn 'Ali Muhammad ibn Bābūyah (304–381/918–991), was one of the most widely acknowledged Shī'a jurists and theologians. Among his many works are *Man lā, Yaḥd Parhu 'l-faqih* (Qom, 1413h), and *'Illal al-sharayi'*, Najaf (11385/1966). On his life and career see Āqā Bozorg Tehrani, *al-Dharīa ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī'a*, Tehran, 1389/1970, and Abulqāsim Khoi'e, *Mu'jam al-rijāl al-ḥadīth*, Najaf, n.d.

> heaven. Such is it that when the spirits and the body are separated, the spirit and the light are returned to their original power and the body is abandoned, for it is from the nature of this world.[42]

It is for this reason that in the Qur'an death is defined as "truth" (*ḥaqq*), that is to say, it is a reality, not an illusive and imaginary event: *"And the agony of death cometh in truth. (And it is said unto him): This is that which thou wast wont to shun."*[43]

Therefore it is perspicacious and intelligent for a human to comprehend the real meaning of death and to prepare himself for it.

[Muhammad Bāqir] Majlisī (d. 1699) has narrated a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Imām Bāqir according to which the Noblest Messenger (may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his family) was asked, "Which of the believers is the most perspicacious?" and he said, "He who remembereth death the most and is the best prepared for it."[44] And he likewise narrates another *ḥadīth* on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq, that "The most perspicacious of people is he whose remembrance of death is strongest."[45]

If death is taken to mean the well-known and oft-witnessed matter of the decay of the body and the cessation of activities, then no one may doubt it, and it is among the most obvious and self-evident facts. So which death is it that has these qualities: its remembrance is effective; preparation for it is beneficial; and certainty regarding it is among the virtues and perfections of

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[42] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *'Illal al-sharāyi'*, Najaf, ed. p. 107, "On Human Natures, Lust and Love."
[43] Qur'an 50: 19.
[44] Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Akhundi edition, p. 126. Majlisī (1037–1110/1628–1699), the most influential religious scholar of the Safavid period, lived during the reign of Shah Sulayman and Shah Sultan Ḥusayn and was appointed as the Shaykh al-Islam of Isfahan. His most important and widely used work is *Biḥār al-anwār*, a collection of Shī'a *ḥadīth* (Tehran, 1957–1973).
[45] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Akhundi edition, pp. 130 and 135.

human beings, in particular those who have faith in God and His justice?

It is clear that what is meant are the collection of stages and waystations that man traverses after death, and in which he meets with the effects of his actions.

It is this process that causes doubt and uncertainty, and it is for this that the prophets and saints (*awliyā'*) have been given such difficult assignments and assigned such weighty proclamations, and with regard to which the divine philosophers and sages have set forth proofs and arguments in order to demonstrate the immateriality and subsistence of the soul, giving them the status of proven, certain facts.

The cause of this doubt and uncertainty is that man wants to use his material sensory faculties to perceive the reality of the stages and waystations that result from his actions in this world. Since this is impossible, he falls into doubt. Such perception is impossible because first, the stages and waystations must be after death, not before it. Otherwise, it would not be the Return (*Ma'ād*), and the waystations after death would not occur; rather they would be worldly matters just like any other worldly affairs. And second, according to definite proofs (*adille-yi mutqanah*) for the immateriality and subsistence of the rational soul, that which humans perceive after death is not by means of the external, material senses as it was in this world, but rather with immaterial faculties after the decay of the body and the subsistence of the soul. Hence, that which must be perceived with actualized immaterial faculties cannot be perceived with material faculties.

For this reason, if human beings endeavor to understand the after-death mysteries (that is, the secrets whose realities are apprehended after death) while still alive—they shall not understand. This is much like human doubt regarding the Divine Essence, Mighty and Glorious, when a man wants to use his five senses and the faculties of imagination and thought to know that most Lofty, Exalted, and Holy Being; whereas God, Exalted is He, is the Creator, the Eternal and the Infinite. Hence it is not possible that He should be encompassed by the mind,

nor can human faculties of thought chain and capture Him. The idea of such encompassment or capturing contradicts the very heart of the matter. Just as one must believe in the existence of God in an undifferentiated manner (*ijmalan*), even though the real knowledge of His most sacred Precinct cannot be attained except after annihilation in His Essence, likewise one must believe in an undifferentiated manner in the existence of worlds after death to which the heart and the conscience bear witness, and expect to attain the real knowledge of their specific nature after death. There is no other way than this.

And so, since humans cannot perceive death and the stages that follow it with the inner or outer material senses, they fall into doubt about what will happen after death. Is there a reckoning after death? Or rather is the human just a material conglomeration of the body that will decompose after death, such that he has neither spirit nor soul and becomes non-existent as if "*he was nothing* [as the Qur'an says] *not even mentioned*"?[46] Shaykh Ṣadūq narrates that Imām Ṣādiq, upon him be peace, said, "God, Majestic and Glorious is He, did not create any certainty devoid of doubt more similar to a doubtful matter devoid of certainty than death."[47]

Death is a real and certain matter, but nonetheless people behave towards death as if it were something doubtful. Even though people witness daily the death of acquaintances and others and see the ruin of their worldly pains and efforts with their very eyes, they nevertheless continue to act in the same way as those who have gone before, as if death had not been ordained for them. This is a certainty that is extremely similar to doubt. It is as if in the world death were not a certainty, and all the deaths of all of those who have passed away were dubious.

So why is it that the matter of death appears inverted in people's minds, and certainty and doubt have been exchanged for one another? The life of this world [like a garment of

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[46] Qur'an 76: 1.

[47] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl al-mamdūḥah wa'l madhmūmah*, 1389/1969 edition, p. 14.

clothing] has an outer surface (*rūyeh*) and an inner lining (*āstari*), which are referred to in scholarly and Qur'anic language as "the outward" (*ẓāhir*) and "the inward" (*bāṭin*).

The outer surface or "the outward" of this life is freshness and beauty, the attachment of the heart to these, and becoming drowned in pleasure and lust, even though these may also be combined with health and wellness. However, the inward is ethics, conscience, purity of intention, purity of gaze, purity of speech, service, sacrifice, servanthood to God, knowledge, piety, and the knowledge of inner realities (*ma'rifat-i asrār*). Those who while in this world set their hearts on its outward aspect and who have nothing to do with its inner dimension and do not take strength from their conscience (which is in fact related to God), and who live superficially and without commitment, for these people the love of this world grows ever stronger in their hearts. They do not have any other purpose and object of love other than the world. For them dying will be extremely difficult. They expend their entire existential capital in order to acquire wealth and status and to increase their prestige in the hearts of the people. With great effort they acquire property, progeny, and more. They become attached to and fall in love with these things. They bind their hearts to them in such a way that each one of them becomes like a chain that ties the heart and the will to itself. When the time comes for them to leave the world, these people find themselves tied to thousands of chains. Each of these desires and attachments that the individual has cultivated in himself and that have taken on an imaginary existence, such as property, friends, children, a wife, family, and many other wishes pull him towards themselves, whereas he has to prepare for the journey and ready himself to go to the Hereafter! There is no return, even for one moment! Each one of these acquisitions, loves, and goals is interred in the earth of oblivion. Even that body that he loved so much takes its place in the earth and becomes the food of the worms and ants of the earth, and the heavy earth is piled upon it.

On the other hand, neither has he been in the position of servanthood towards the Truth, Majestic and Glorious be He; nor has he bowed his head in prostration in submission and humility (*khaksārī*) before Him who has brought into manifestation such marvelous (*'ajīb*) theophanies and awe-inspiring sights of the world; nor has he made sacrifices nor given aid to the poor and needy; nor has he acquired the life of the Hereafter and its light through righteous deeds, nor acted on the basis of conscience and intellect. He has not become acquainted with the Law of God, and he has been in constant conflict and enmity with the knowledge of the inward and the immateriality of the soul. Now he has to leave this world! He will be surrounded with these problems, in confusion and at a loss; the call for him to leave this world has come, and he has time neither to delay nor to make preparations.

In particular, since his acquisition of worldly possessions has been arduous, his love and attachment to them is stronger, and therefore, abandoning them and tearing his heart away from them is all the more difficult. This is because there is a direct correlation between the amount of effort expended and hardship endured for the attainment of something and the love one has for it. For this reason when the time of his death comes, it is a cause of great unease for him. It is as if mountains have crumbled upon his head. Even if in this world he suffered from all kinds of afflictions, he is still not content with death, for his afterlife is in greater ruin.

Conversely, as for a man of faith who is connected to his Lord, and who through purification of his soul has reached the virtuous city, who has emigrated from the outer world of vanity to the immortal world of the inward, who through servanthood to God has become connected to the beings of the world of disengaged spiritual realities and meaning (*ma'nā*), and who has done his best in his obedience to the command of God and in the polishing (*sayqal zadan*) of his carnal soul that incites to evil, and in the performing of righteous deeds, if such a person becomes aware of the time of his death, he says,

> Praise be to Allah (*alḥamd-u-li'lLāh*), I don the sacred garments of pilgrimage (*iḥram*) and go from here to the Kingdom of Immortality (*khulūd*), from the world of vanity to the world of Eternity, from this small limited domain to the worlds of Infinity, and from the outside to the inside of the sanctum of the Encounter [*with the Lord*], for I sacrifice my life at the feet of the Eternal Beloved. This borrowed life which the Friend hath lent to Ḥāfiẓ. Someday I shall see His face and surrender it to Him."[48]

There is the world of pure life and immense space, the center of the effulgence of life to the worlds, absolute beauty, the shining of the luminosity of disengaged spiritual beings, [the abode of] the pure spirits of the angels, the prophets, the Imāms, and the Friends of God. *There* is the source of magnificence and glory of the Sacred, the Pure Light, and Pure Gnosis. Thus the believer is not worried, but rather welcomes death, and even if in this world are all lawful gifts and blessings within reach, nonetheless death makes him happy, for he says, "*...the Hereafter is better and more lasting.*"[49] And so, when he is informed of death, he gets underway swiftly and unencumbered.

The inward being of the believer is better than his outward being, and the inner being of the non-believer is more corrupt that his outward. The believer hopes for the meeting with God, for he finds the fruits of the labors of his life real and protected in the divine court (laws) of the world of existence (*dar nāmus-i alame hastī*), and laid before his eyes after he departs from the world. His wage and requital, his reward and compensation, the highest plane of paradise (*riḍwān*), the encounter with the Beloved's Presence, each and every one of these are present; that which was hidden from him in this world shall become visible to him. This bodily veil, which had been a slight impediment to the attainment of the highest degrees of detachment, perishes, and in death he finds himself in the

[48] Shamseddin Mohammad Ḥāfiẓ, *Divān*, edited by Mohammad Qazvinī and Qāsim Ghanī, (3d.ed.), Tehran, Qoqnus Publishers, 1380/2001, p. 278.
[49] Qur'an 87: 17.

embrace of the union with the beauty of the Eternal Presence where he abides in that eternal domain forever.

Shaykh Ṣadūq has narrated from Imām Ṣādiq, upon him be peace, that Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā, upon him be peace, had a friend fond of wit and humor who had not come to see him for a while. One day he had the honor of visiting the Imām, who asked him how he was. He replied, "O son of the Messenger of Allah! I spend my days doing that which is contrary to my wishes, to God's wishes, and to the wishes of the devil."

Imām Ḥasan, upon him be peace, smiled and said, "And how is that?"

He said, "Such is it that God loves that I should obey Him and never commit an act of disobedience to Him, yet I am not thus. And the devil loves that I should disobey God and never act in obedience to Him, and I am not thus. And as for myself, I would love that I should never die, yet I am not thus."

At that moment a man stood up and said, "O son of the Messenger of Allah! Why is it that we despise death and love it not?" The Imām, upon him be peace, said, "For thou hast ruined thy Hereafter, and made prosperous thy worldly life, and thou hatest to pass from prosperity to ruin."[50]

Likewise, in the book *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*, Shaykh Ṣadūq narrates from the Fourth Imām, 'Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn, upon him be peace, that

> On the Day of 'Āshūrā when the situation became difficult for Ḥusayn, 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (upon them both be peace) looked to those who were with him first and then turned against him. Their complexions turned pale, their limbs trembled, and their hearts quivered. As for Ḥusayn himself, upon him be peace, and some of those who were with him, their characteristics (*khaṣā'iṣ*) were such that their complexions would become radiant, their limbs calm, and their souls in peace. And they would say to one another, "Look! He fears death not."

[50]Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-'aqā'id*, as quoted in the original text.

And Ḥusayn, upon him be peace, would say to them,

Patience, O sons of nobility! For death is naught but a bridge that brings you from misery and adversity to vast gardens and perpetual blessings. So which of thee abhors that he should be transferred from a prison to a palace? And what is there for your enemies save the lot of one who is transported from a palace to prison and torment? Verily my father hath narrated to me from the Messenger of Allah, upon him and his household be blessings and peace, that "This world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the infidel, and death is the bridge of these to their paradises and those to their inferno." Neither do I lie, nor was I lied to.[51]

[51] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*, p. 389, the 29th narration.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Fourth Discourse

Life: The Best Asset for Attaining Perfection and Excellence

No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed. Whoso desireth the reward of the world, We bestow on him thereof; and whoso desireth the reward of the Hereafter, We bestow on him thereof. We shall reward the thankful.[52]

From this blessed verse it can be understood that this world is the abode of free will. The Glorious Lord has created the human being with free will, and has granted him various faculties such as feelings, emotions, intellectual abilities, and natural, material, and spiritual inclinations such that he might, by his own free will, traverse the Way.

If man's objective in life on earth were the fulfillment of carnal desires and the dominance of emotions over the intellectual faculties, and consequently arrogance and violation of [others'] rights and of laws, the result would simply be these fleeting enjoyments and pleasures and the dominance of transitory and temporary emotions and nothing else. However, if man determines his way of life on the basis of the logic of the intellect, and continually brings his feelings into equilibrium, using that great and powerful force [of the intellect], and takes benefit from each of these feelings and emotions to the extent necessary and at the appropriate time, the result of this will also be kept for him with God, and on the basis of that very noble principle, God will reward him.

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[52] Qur'an 3: 145.

It is narrated in the book *Jami' al-Akhbar*[53] that someone asked Abū Dharr al-Ghifāri,[54] "Why is dying distasteful to us?" He replied, "Because thou hast made this world prosperous for thyselves and ruined thy Hereafter, and the transition from a prosperous place to a ruined place is distasteful to you."

It was asked of Abū Dharr, "How shall our state (*ḥāl*) be when we enter unto God? Abū Dharr said,

> People are of two kinds, people of beautiful deeds (*nīkoo kārān*) and those whose deeds are evil and ugly (*zeshtkārān*). As for him whose deeds are beautiful, he shall enter unto the Presence of God like a person who has been far from his kin for a long time (and goes towards them with boundless vitality (*neshāṭ*) and joy. There he enjoys the infinite bounty and beneficence and unveiled beauty of the Eternal Witness (*shāhid-i azalī*). As for the entry unto God of him whose deeds are ugly, it shall be as the meeting of a fugitive criminal slave who has been brought before his master. He sees the boundless wrath of his master. A man who has transgressed the rights of his Master and His creations and who transgresses the limits of servanthood shall enter unto the Loving (*mehrban*), Subtle, Vengeful God with boundless shame and humiliation, and sees himself to be the subject of all kind of recompense and torment (*adhāb*).

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[53] *Jāmi' al-Akhbār*, also known as *Ma'ārij al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-Dīn*, was written by Muhammad ibn Muhammad Sabzawārī. He was a well-known scholar of the seventh/thirteenth century. In this book, he has collected many *aḥādīth* and narrations of the *Ahl al-Bayt* on ethics and culture in 141 chapters. See Mohammad Mua'dhdhin Khorasani, *Tuhfah-ye 'Abbasi*, trans. by Mohammad H. Faghfoory, University Press of America, 2007, p. 78.

[54] Abū Dharr Ghifāri (d. 32/652) was one of the most pious companions of the Prophet who joined Imām Alī. He is remembered for his strict piety and also his opposition to the caliph Uthmān. He is particularly venerated by the Shī'ites as one of the four companions of Imām Alī. *EI*[1], 4; *KM*, 220, 448–49.

It was said to Abū Dharr, "So how dost thou see our state before God to be?" Abū Dharr said, "Measure thy actions by the Book of God. It is entered in the Noble Qur'an that truly pure people of righteous deeds shall be in eternal blessings, and truly the licentious people whose deeds are ugly shall be amidst the layers of the fire of hell." That person asked, "So where then is the mercy of God?" Abū Dharr replied, "Verily, the mercy of God is near to good people who do good (and not to every transgressor with all his crimes)."[55]

It has been narrated that the Most Noble Messenger, May God grant him and his household blessings and peace, said, "[The road to] paradise is fraught with difficulties (*makārih*) and patience, and whosoever is patient towards the difficulties of this world shall enter Paradise, and [the road to] hell is lined with pleasures and desires, and whosoever gives his soul its pleasure and desire shall enter the fire."

From this *ḥadīth* it can be understood that all of the actions that a human being accomplishes must be on the basis of the truth (*Ḥaqq*), and that to act according to the truth is somewhat difficult. All righteous deeds necessitate that one expend one's time, comfort, wealth, and power to gain control over the desires of the [carnal] soul. Man must use the power of the intellect and of piety (*taqwā*) so that he might be able to act, to perform the night prayers, to fast, to make *jihād*, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (*Ḥajj*), to [cultivate] the virtues, to have mercy on others, to be tolerant, and so forth...and each and every one of these is difficult. To put it briefly, to live a noble life on the basis of virtue and purity and in the station of servanthood and submission to the commands of God, Exalted be He, and to discipline the soul with permissible ascetic practices cause one's life constantly to encounter that which is disagreeable. The man of God must step firm-footedly into the battlefield of struggle. For these things are the way to highest station of paradise (*riḍwān*) and the prelude to the purification and cultivation of the soul. As long as the soul is not purified

[55] Muhammad ibn Muhammad Sabzawārī, *Jāmi' al-Akhbār*, as quoted in Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 6: 137.

and cultivated, attaining paradise will be impossible. Conversely, [the road to] hell is filled with unrestrained desires and pleasures and all manner of crimes, betrayals, and transgressions. To satiate the soul with what is odious is one of the consequences of hell. The way to hell is the way of loosing the reins, the way of unrestraint, and the way of lack of commitment and absence of responsibility.

Indeed, he who does not behave in this world according to the correct criterion (*mīzān*), nor act according to the responsibilities of humanity, supposing that he is left to his own devices and shall not be called to account, seeing himself to be separate from this awe-inspiring world with its wonderful order and acting negligently (*sarsarī*)—such a person will in fact be responsible in the well-ordered system of this world and shall be brought to reckoning and shall see the penalty for his actions. This is the meaning of hell.

It has been narrated that the Most Noble Messenger, may God grant him and his Household blessings and peace, said as part of his advice to Abū Dharr, "O Abū Dharr! Verily this world is accursed, and accursed is what it contains."[56]

What is meant by the "accursed world" is to live on the basis of fantasies, desires, and transitory pleasures, to be negligent of the real purpose of human life and in ignorance and forgetfulness of God. The meaning of "this world" is to follow the animalistic sensations and emotions and bestial instincts and to be far from the logic of the intellect. "This world" (*dunyā*) literally means a lowly (*dani*) life, as opposed to a "higher life," which means living at a high station on the plane of human virtues. That is why in the Majestic Qur'an this-worldly life is always juxtaposed to the Hereafter. *"They know an appearance of the worldly life and are negligent of the Hereafter."*[57]

The life of the Hereafter, which is the inner reality of this world, is the higher life. Human life is based on intelligence

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[56] Abū 'Ali Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan Ṭabarsī, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, Lithographic edition, p. 258.
[57] Qur'an 30: 7.

(*'aqlānī*), whereas the life of this world, which is based on emotions and sensations, is a carnal, selfish life. Of course, what is meant by the "accursed world" is not living on the earth and benefiting from the blessings of the Lord. To live a long life filled with health and well-being, free from anxieties and filled with tranquility and of peace of mind and heart, is no sin.

Our entry and departure from this world is not within our choice and is neither accursed nor blameworthy. The heavens and the earth are not sinful, and on the face of the earth have lived prophets and saints, and they continue to do so. They are not accursed, and their living on the earth will not cause them to be corrupted or deficient. They were not and are not far from the mercy of God.

What is meant by "this world" is bestial life. That is to say, the human being, who must with all his intellectual faculties attain the highest level of the "arc of ascent" and climb to the highest apogee of the stations and exaltation of humanity, degrades his own life and, on the basis of the animalistic logic of sensations, takes eating, drinking, excess, transgression, obedience to fantasies, and meaningless ambitions as his greatest concern, failing to be mindful of the goal of his creation.

Most people have mistaken scorn for this world to be scorn for the material life in this world and the enjoyment of licit, divine gifts. In fact living on this earth with righteousness, piety, justice, honorable traits, and servanthood towards the Real, Majestic and Exalted be He, is the best means of reaching the highest station of paradise (*riḍwān*) and its inner reality, which is the higher life, and stands in opposition to life in this world. This earth, with all of the specific characteristics it possesses, has been the cradle for the raising and nurturing of many people of pure heart and of the people of beautiful deeds, those who are always traveling towards the higher world and have not entered the low worldly life even for an instant, but rather have taken up their abode in the higher life while at the same time enjoying the divine gifts on earth.

Living on the earth, [taking care of the] health of the body, a long lifespan, and peace of mind are the best basis for the Hereafter, and they are a source of felicity and a way to perfection (*takāmul*) of the human being. In fact they are the only means for the way to perfection and felicity.

There are many narrations that tell us that the prophets and Imāms, upon them be peace, lived a daily life like everyone else. If these things were blameworthy, why would they have done this?

The Commander of the Faithful ['Ali] planted many date groves and dug many wells, but he did this in the higher life, not in the this-worldly life, and he donated the proceeds from them.

In the commentaries on the blessed verse, "*Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire!*"[58] it is said that what is meant by "*good in this world*" is the lawful wealth that one acquires,[59] and there is a narration that, "The one who labors diligently for his family is as the one who fights in the path of God."[60]

If it is said that this world is useless, what it meant is the world of desires and negligence, not the world as was defined. If the human being does not have the correct [way of living in the] world, he will not have the Hereafter. The Hereafter is based on the correct world. All of the perfections (*kamālāt*) that we acquire are in this world, so the Hereafter is dependent on this world. These perfections are achieved during the period of our lifetime, and therefore our lifetime is the dearest and most valuable divine gift.

A person came to visit Imām Ṣādiq, upon him be peace, and said, "I am weary of the world and from God I wish my own death." The Imām replied, "From God wish life that thou might

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[58] Qur'an 2: 201.

[59] Abū 'Ali Fadl ibn al-Ḥasan Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fi tafsīr al-Qur'an*, Tehran, 1390/1970, pp. 297–298.

[60] Muhammed ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr 'Āmili, *Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*, v.12, p. 43, Islāmīyah edition.

obey God and not disobey Him and commit sin. If thou remain living in this world and are obedient it would be better for thee than if thou wert to die and neither obey or disobey Him."[61]

God has given us intellect, knowledge, and other divine gifts that we might act at every moment and traverse one degree towards perfection, and ultimately also attain a station on the Day of the Resurrection. After death the human soul will no longer be able to make any progress or ascent.

The Commander of the Faithful, upon him be peace, said, "As for God-fearing and pious people, were it not for the term that God has written for them, their spirits would not remain in their bodies even for the blink of an eye out of their longing for reward and their fear of punishment."[62]

The content and reference of this statement is precisely this, that the reason that one does not fly up to the higher world is that the agreed term (*ajal*), which God has determined for the benefit and perfection of each individual, has not come to an end, and this being the case life is better than death. In any case, this world is the abode of the acquisition of noble qualities of character, virtue, and perfection. So long as each person is alive, he must know his own value and make an effort towards attaining a higher human station, even if it is only by uttering the formula for Divine Unity (*Lā Ilāhah ill'lLāh—There is no god but Allah*) once. For after death and the transition to the Hereafter the results of his actions will be present and fixed.

The logic of those people who say, "Who has brought news from that world? These are all fables that the prophets have mixed together in order to tame the disobedience of the people," is the logic of the near-sighted. This is because, first, the sense of responsibility is part of the very nature of the human being, who has intelligence and free will, and thus has nothing to do with prophets. The human being is part of this vast and splendid world that is in conformity with the truth. Man's free will makes him bound to choose the way of good or evil in this world. This is the meaning of human commitment and responsibility in the

[61] Mohammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, v.6, p.128.
[62] *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon 191.

system of creation, just like every single being and even every single particle.

To exclude humanity from this universal rule and to consider the world to be futile, meaningless, and without purpose is to violate the very basis of this world. Such a view is indeed based on the denial of the principle of origin and the authenticity of the world of being.

Second, the denial of revelation, belief in the impossibility of connection with the unseen world (*ghayb*), and denial of the metaphysical world is not commonly accepted by the world's thinkers today and is considered to be false. The world's universities are embarking on the path of finding and attaining this truth. The approach towards divine wisdom and gnosis is a window of hope from the shining of the light of truth, which gives a sense of promise to their hearts.

The system of Transcendent Philosophy has given decisive proofs for the existence of the celestial and unseen worlds, leaving no room for objection. The Most Noble Prophet, upon him and his family be blessings and peace, than whom we know no one more truthful, has brought news of the unseen worlds and their minutiae, and that which he says is truth. His vision was not with the eye of the head, but rather with the eye of the heart, which has the capacity to apprehend the spiritual worlds, paradise, and hell, with all of their specific characteristics. Indeed, a false logic only considers sight to belong to the eye of the head and denies the unseen worlds. Knowledge of the spiritual and celestial worlds with the eye of the heart, which is an actuality for the great prophets and our Prophet, upon him and his family be blessings and peace, is possible, and they have gone, seen, and returned with news.

The Ascension to Heaven (*mi'rāj*) of the Messenger of God means the movement or journey from this world of the senses to the intermediary world, and then to the world of the Resurrection and to the world of the Divine Names and Qualities, and entry into the sanctuary of the Majestic Presence and the sanctum of the station of Power and Glory. There is no room for doubt or misgiving about this.

Third, that they say no one has gone [to the other worlds] to bring news of them, even assuming that it is true, is not a sufficient argument for responsibility to be negated. This is because there is a great difference between the statement, "No one has gone to bring news" (which implies lack of knowledge, and hence it is possible for such matters to exist, but no one has brought news of them and we do not have knowledge of them) and the statement, "Someone has gone and brought news that there is no such thing" (in which there is knowledge that such things do not exist). The first statement is not an argument for the non-existence of unseen worlds and does not negate the possibility of their existence. Indeed we do not have any proof of the non-existence of spiritual and celestial worlds. In these circumstances by what rational authorization do human beings have the right to consider themselves free [from all responsibility]?

Abū 'Ali Sīnā (Avicenna) says, "Whatever oddity strike your ear, consider it to be a possibility so long as someone does not provide a proof which dissuades you of this."[63]

Now, it is possible for the Resurrection to occur, and a veracious witness whose veracity has been confirmed, namely our Most Noble Prophet, has informed us that it will actually take place. Therefore, accepting and affirming a possibility and taking measures to prevent a possible harm is one of the independent qualities of the intellect.

During a discussion with a materialist and atheist, Imām Ṣādiq, upon him be peace, condemned him in the following way,

> If by any chance or supposition there is no God and no Resurrection or recompense [for ill deeds], in the end thy outcome and ours shall be equal and we shall come to no harm. However if we suppose that God, the Resurrection, and the Reckoning do exist, then the difference shall be

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[63] Ibn Sīnā, *Isharat*, Lithographic edition, last page.

great between us and thee. For we shall be in the blessing of God and thou shalt be in torment and hell.[64]

Fourthly, the communications of people's souls with the imaginal world, whether during sleep or wakefulness, and with the dead and their state of affairs, is a proof of the reality of the spiritual worlds, the Resurrection, and the intermediary world. There have been a great many people whose hearts were illuminated and whose intentions were pure who came to interact with the intermediary world while in the waking world and spoke with spirits, and who have then explained the nature of the reckonings that occur in the grave. These people, first of all, were so just, pious, and truthful that there is no possibility that they might be lying; second, there are many such cases; and third, the contents of their reports are similar. The late Ayatullah Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Golpāygāni, may God be pleased with him, has reported many things of this nature. For example he narrated,

> When I left Isfahan and went to Najaf for a certain amount of time I used to see people in the forms that they have in the intermediary world, in the form of wild beasts and animals and devils, until I became dejected [*malūl*] as a result of seeing this so much. One day I visited the blessed shrine (of Imām 'Ali), and I made a request from the Commander of the Faithful, that he take this state from me, for I could not bear it. He did indeed take it from me, and from that day on I saw people in their ordinary forms.[65]

How well has God, Majestic and Exalted is He, expressed these matters in the Qur'an[66] that at that time, during the Resurrection, some faces shall be fresh and blossoming, gazing at the endless beauty of their Lord, looking upon His signs and

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[64] Ṭabarsī, *Iḥtijāj*, Vol. 2, p. 75. Shaykh Faḍl ibn Ḥasan Ṭabarsī (468–548/1076–1153) is one of the most eminent Shī'a jurists.

[65] Ayatullah Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Golpāygāni (1295–1377/1878–1958), jurist, Gnostic, and theologian, who was a Source of Emulation for many Shī'ites in Iran and Iraq.

[66] What follows is an interpretive translation of 75: 22–30 in the Qur'an.

manifestations and finding Him there in those displays. And at that time some other faces will be gloomy, struck with sadness and distress, encompassed by taint and affliction. They suppose that a painful, back-breaking torment shall be imposed upon them. So, it is not as they suppose when they deny the Resurrection. Rather, when a person's life reaches the chest and strikes the clavicle and the throat, which is the person's last breath, and it is asked who might cure him, who can make a prayer or write a talisman? And at that time no one will be able to do anything and hope shall be severed, and he shall see separation to be imminent, and his shins (*saaq*) shall lie still next to one another, and he shall have no power to move. Or according to another interpretation this is the state of gradual demise and the throes of death when the strength of the body dwindles like the setting sun, when the unseen world will rise like the dawn and death begin to manifest itself.

Still according to another interpretation it is the time when the angels of mercy and wrath are gathered round in vast numbers, and they give way to allow this servant to be brought to his destination. Beware, O Prophet! That is the time of moving forward and directing towards thy Lord!

The following verses[67] were revealed in reference to Abū Jahl,[68] who ridiculed the Prophet, may the blessings of God be upon him and his family, and took his invitation to prayer and charity and [his warning of] the Return (*Ma'ād*) to be fables. The verses say, that neither did he give alms nor pray, but rather he denied God and the Day of the Resurrection, turning his back to the world and the word of God and His Messenger. And then he went arrogantly to his own family, taking pride in his impertinence towards the Messenger of God. Yea! Hell is

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[67] *"So he gave nothing in charity, nor did he pray! But on the contrary, he rejected Truth and turned away! Then did he stalk to his family in full conceit! Woe to thee, (O men!), yea, woe! Again, Woe to thee, (O men!), yea, woe!"* Qur'an 75: 31–35.

[68] 'Amr ibn Hisham, known as Abū Jahl (Father of Ignorance), of the Banī Makhzum family of the Quraysh tribe. He was an ardent enemy of Islam and the Prophet, and his hatred towards Islam and Muslims earned him the title of "The Pharaoh of the *Ummah*."

appropriate for him. and the fire of hell is more fitting for him than anything else.

Does the human being suppose that he was created without a purpose. having no responsibility or commitment with regard to the world of creation? Was not the origin of this human from semen spilled? And then this took shape as a clot of blood in the womb of the mother. and the Lord gave him a determined form and created limbs and senses in proportion. and fashioned him with instincts and dispositions. And that God who made humans in two sexes. male and female. is this Lord not powerful enough to bring people back to life and lead them to requital for their actions and behavior?

It has been narrated that the Commander of the Faithful used often to recite the verse. "*Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless?*"[69] And tears would flow from his eyes.[70]

[69] Qur'an 75: 36.

[70] Sayyid Ibn Ṭawus. *al-Malāhim al-fitan*. Najaf Edition. p. 154.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Fifth Discourse

The Identification of Sleep with Death

It is God that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily in this are Signs for those who reflect.[71]

This blessed verse states explicitly that death and sleep are of the same genus (*jins*) and have the same status. In death and in sleep God takes the soul. If its term has reached its end then God keeps the soul, and if it has not then He returns the soul to the body when it wakes up.

Take heed! First, in this verse to refer to the taking of the soul, which is common to death and sleep, the word *tawaffā* is used, not the word *qabḍ*. This is because *tawaffā* means "taking" in a general sense, whereas *qabḍ* means "to take" and "to seize." God takes the soul in both sleep and death, but in death in addition to this there is also "seizing," meaning that the soul is no longer able to return. In another verse, the word *tawaffā* is also used to refer specifically to sleep:

It is He who doth take your souls (yatawafākum) by night, and hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day: by day doth He raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled; in the end unto Him will be your return; then will He show you the truth of all that ye did.[72]

Secondly, that which God takes is the human soul (*yatawafā 'l-anfus*), and the soul is none other than the spirit. During death and sleep the body is stationary in one place, and it is the soul

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[71] Qur'an 39: 42.
[72] Qur'an 6: 60.

that travels in other worlds. There are two pieces of evidence for this argument [in the Qur'an] where God says *yatawafakum*. "He takes *you*."[73] In conventional speech, Arabic being no exception, the pronoun is used to refer to the reality of the human [i.e. the spirit]. Likewise, in verse 6 of chapter 84, God says: "*O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord—painfully toiling,—but thou shalt meet Him.*" This term of address is an address to the reality of the human, which is the spirit and which travels from the world of immaterial creation, and after traversing this world and others goes towards God and the encounter with Him. It is not the body that is an instrument for the spirit to attain perfection.

Another piece of evidence is that God addresses the inhabitants of hell in the following way: "*He will say: 'What number of years did ye stay (*labithum*) on earth?' They will say: 'We stayed a day or part of a day: but ask those who keep account.' He will say: 'Ye stayed not but a little—if ye had only known!'*"[74]

In this verse the word *labitha*, meaning "to stop" or "to tarry," is used to refer to life on the earth, and "tarrying" refers to stopping on the way, because the human spirit moves from worlds that precede matter, tarries for a while in this world, and then migrates. But to address the body and the material aspect of the human with the word *labitha* is not correct.

In Shī'i narrations this truth has been presented, namely that at the moment of death God takes or seizes the souls of people, and that the Hereafter is better for the believer since the taints and defilements have been removed from their reality and they shall be established, pure and inviolate, in the lap of all kinds of felicities, joys, and pleasures. It is in this sense that the Imāms have likened death to the removal of dirt and impurity

[73] Qur'an 6: 60.
[74] Qur'an 23: 112–114.

from the body.[75] or to a medicine that brings about the health of the body and the disappearance of pain and suffering.[76] For example. it was asked of Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn. upon him be peace. "What is death?" He answered.

> Death. for the believer. is like stripping off of filthy. infested clothes. like removing heavy shackles and fetters and exchanging them for the finest clothes with the most pleasing. pure fragrances. like mounting the best and most road-worthy steeds and entering the worthiest of dwellings. For the infidel it is like stripping off of the finest clothes and being transferred from one's own familiar and dear home. and then exchanging these for the coarsest. filthiest clothes. the most horrifying dwellings and the strongest torments.[77]

What these narrations mean is that after death the spirit is living and is either tormented or blessed. and it is just like dreams people have in which they may be delighted by seeing charming views. or they may become disconsolate as a result of seeing horrific scenes. For this reason when Imām Muhammad Taqī. upon him be peace. was asked about the reality of death. he said,

> Death is precisely the sleep that comes after you each night. with the difference that its duration is long and one does not awake from it save on the Day of the Resurrection. People see dreams while they are asleep and become happy through all kinds of indescribable and immeasurable joys. or are stricken with all kinds of indescribable and immeasurable horrors and terrors. What is the manner of their happiness and joy or their terror and panic while asleep? Even so is death and the states that arise for humans in that condition. Hence be ready for death![78]

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[75] Shaykh Ṣadūq. *Ma'ānī al-Akhbār*. Qum. 1361s/1982. p. 290.This is part of a *ḥadīth* that describes the manner in which Imām 'Ali al-Naqī visited one of his companions who was on the brink of death.

[76] Ibid. pp. 289–290.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Shaykh Ṣadūq. *Ma'ānī al-Akhbār*. p.289.

Taking this narration into consideration it can be said that death is a heavy sleep, and sleep is a light death. It is in this sense that death and sleep are alike, save that there is no return from death, as so many narrations explain. All of the great philosophers and sages of the world are bewildered by the reality of sleep and death, and are unable to comprehend their mysteries. One difference that can be asserted between sleep and death is that during sleep the spirit reduces its attachment to the body but does not sever it. As a whole this attachment remains, and it is through this undifferentiated attachment that the body performs its functions, though more slowly and gently than in the waking state. However, at the moment of death the spirit completely severs its attachment to the body and goes to the world of absolute and total immateriality.

As it is in precisely this way that during sleep the spirit goes to the differentiated immaterial world, which is the lower celestial world or the archetypal world, (*'ālam-i mithāl*) and the body falls to the ground. At the moment of death the spirit moves either to that world or to the higher celestial world, the spiritual world, and the world of the soul, and abandons the body. Thus death is a permanent sleep and sleep is a death of a few hours. Just as different people have different levels of sleep, some sleeping lightly, others sleeping heavily, and others sleeping extremely heavily such that they do not wake soon, so likewise is death. The death of some is light and thus at the mere summons towards the station of Glory of the Possessor of Majesty, they come alive and emigrate towards the Greater Resurrection; whereas for some death is heavy, and even heavier for some others to such an extent that the trumpet (*ṣawr*) must be blown for their souls to awaken and come alive and be present in the Greater Resurrection.

The silk-worm and the different life-stages that it undergoes are a great source of edification (*'ibrat*) and wonder. Those who have seen these different life-stages with their own eyes from beginning to end can derive edification from it and observe in this animal a complete course on Return. One can see how in different stages of nutrition and sleep and metamorphosis, it

transforms from a small black worm to a large white worm, and after reaching its maturity and perfection it wants to bid farewell to the life that is determined by its transient life. This animal gradually builds a grave for itself, and while building this grave it is busy gradually dying. The throes of death overcome it, and it becomes completely confused. Its grave is its cocoon, and after the cocoon has been completed, the animal sleeps inside it. It is a long sleep, lasting 20 days, but during this period the animal does not have the form of a worm. It is so gathered in upon itself that it no longer bears any similarity to the worm it once was. It shrinks from six or seven centimeters to about one centimeter, like a burned bean or a wasp egg, completely dry and dead. But in reality it is not dead, and in that cocoon it journeys and undergoes transformations. What motion in the substance of its being is present there, in which at every moment it is pulled from stage to stage and transferred from state to state, such that in its progressive existential journey towards perfection it is drawn ever closer to the highest stations (*a'lā madārij*). [This continues] until little by little it comes alive and lifts its head from that heavy sleep and breaks its grave with the saliva of its own mouth and comes out of the cocoon-grave and is present in the desert of the Gathering.[79] But what a wondrous form it has found! That long worm is now a butterfly, and has no resemblance to a worm at all. Glory be to God, what is going on here? What manner of being is this? What kind of transformation and perfection is this?

Although in this analogy the transformations were material, and it is hence not an [accurate] representation of human death, which involves transformations on the level of the archetypal world (*mithālī*) and the Resurrection, nevertheless this is a very interesting and noteworthy similitude for the period of human death and his sleep in the grave, the complete loss of initial bodily form, and the interment of the eyes, ears, and limbs in

[79] *Maḥshar*, literally "Place of Gathering," which refers to the Day of Resurrection.

the dust of annihilation, while also showing these transformations do not imply the complete absence of life.

On the Day of the Resurrection, this very human being will become present in another form and shape, which is the actual form of his rational soul. However, the Resurrection (*Qiyāmat*) of this worm is after 20 days, and the Resurrection of the human takes longer.

In order to explain this issue, we say the human has three levels [of existence]: first, his body, which is his "world of nature"; second, his faculties of thought and imagination, which are his archetypal world and form (*'alam-i mithāl va ṣūrat*[80]); third, his spirit and soul, which can be interpreted as the "world of the soul." These three levels are not separate from one another, but rather are within one another, though not in the relation of material container and object contained (like a spoon, inside a glass, inside a bowl). On the contrary, the spirit is not separate from the body. The body is encompassed (*mundakk*) by the form, and the form is encompassed by the soul.

An analogy: an almond has flesh (*jism*), oil, and essence (*'uṣārah*). Its first level is its flesh, that is to say, its body. Its second level is the oil, which is not outside the flesh, but rather is to be found in all parts of that flesh, and is equivalent to its life. The third level is the essence, which is also not outside the oil, but is rather distributed throughout the particles of the oil, and this is equivalent to the spirit. Of course, this analogy is different from the encompassing of the body in the form and the form in the soul in two respects: the first is that in the almond the essence is encompassed by the oil and the oil is

[80] Throughout this study the term form (*ṣūrah*) is used to denote two meanings. "One is the form in the Aristotelian sense, i.e., that to which abstracted concepts correspond in the representational theory of knowledge (*al-'ilm al- ḥūṣūlī*). The second meaning is "essence," but not in the sense of quiddity (*māhīyah*) as an abstraction of the mind but in the sense of concrete essences that belong to the intelligible world. See *Asfār arba'ah*, III, p. 284, note 3. See also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 214." As quoted in Ibrahim Kalin, *Sadr al-Dīn al-Shirazi: Life and Works*, p. 242.

encompassed by the flesh of the almond, but in the subject of our discussion (i.e. the human being) the case is the reverse: the body is encompassed by the form and the form is encompassed by the soul.

The second difference is that in the almond, the essence is actually within the oil and the oil is really inside the parts of the nut, whereas in the subject of our discussion there is no relation of "being inside." Rather, the spirit encompasses and encapsulates the body, and the body encompasses and encapsulates the soul. It is only by way of example and for abbreviation *(ḍīq-i ta'bīr)* that we say one is "inside" the other. Indeed, the human body is like the flesh of the almond, the imaginal world is like the oil of the almond, and the human spirit is like the essence of the almond. The human body may be perceived with the senses. The imaginal [level], which is his mental world, is immaterial and is his "lower celestial world." The soul, which is none other than his spirit, is more immaterial and is his "higher celestial world."

The human spirit and rational soul does not change from birth to the moment of death, but it subsists and specifies the person's individuality. Of course it does develop and moves from the stages of innate capability and potentiality to the stage of actuality and entification. The human mental world likewise progresses but does not change. The body, however, is always changing and being transformed, losing parts and adding other parts to itself. Food provides the replacement for what has been broken down, and must always take the place of those parts that have been lost.

When man sleeps, his body is left on the ground, but his imaginal faculty and his mind do not remain there. His mind is awake and moves. It solves intellectual problems and performs actions, which we call dreams. In some dreams fear, horror, and anger overwhelm him, and in others joy, pleasure, and comfort do so, and upon waking he supposes that he has accomplished actions with the body, though his body has been lying motionless, and has not acted, moved, or spoken. His limbs were not involved in these actions, but rather it was his spirit,

with a celestial and imaginal body, which accomplished these acts, having no relation to his material body. In the waking world also, the spirit accomplishes actions with that very celestial form, and the body moves in accordance with this. However, since the world of nature is strong and the imaginal world is weak, the spirit cannot accomplish whatever it wants with the body, and the dominance of the world of nature is an impediment to many of the wishes of the spirit. For this reason it accomplishes many actions without the body. For example, while the person is sitting, the mental faculties (the person's imaginal world) can depart, accomplish all the rites of the *Hajj*, and then return.

While awake, people mostly busy their real attention with the body, and for this reason they cannot accomplish all the actions of the soul with the body. However, during sleep the attention towards the body is weak, and the human spirit perceives its own reality in an *imaginal* form, and thus without paying attention to the body it accomplishes all its actions through the imaginal body and the form.

During wakefulness, attention to the body dominates, and thus the human being supposes his reality to be his body. During sleep, attention to the form and the imaginal body dominates, and thus the human supposes his reality to be that very form and imaginal body. While awake, when you imagine that you are going to Mecca, you are still here yourself. You have imagined Mecca and the accomplishing of the rites of pilgrimage there. In the dream world you have indeed gone to Mecca; the imaginal form in sleep is the reality of the human, and on account of this it can accomplish important actions that it cannot do while awake. This is because while awake it wants to function with the body and it does not have the power to do so, whereas during sleep it is the imaginal body, whose strength is a thousand times more, that acts, and therefore it takes flight and in one moment recites the entire Qur'an, or accomplishes the likes of such amazing feats.

During death, since one divests oneself of the body entirely, and because the state of immateriality is stronger and the spirit

is more free, even more amazing acts can be accomplished. For example one can gain universal knowledge and in a single moment put aside all of one's attachments and become aware of all aspects and qualities of nature, the states of the souls of people, the inhabitants of paradise and hell, and the nature of the reckoning and measuring of their deeds. The likes of this encompassing knowledge (*iḥāta-ye 'ilmīyah*) can come about for the "Friends of God" (*awliyā'*) while alive and awake in this world, and it is indeed quite possible for the wayfarers of the path of God who have not yet reached the station of total detachment to gain this [knowledge], whether awake or during sleep, as a passing state without its being a permanent disposition

In the case of the silk-worm, which goes into the cocoon for a few days and then comes out as a butterfly, we might say that it has died and come back to life. However, it is not thus, for this animal, from the time that it enters the cocoon and sleeps, neither eating nor moving and completely taking the form of something dead, in its essence is busy with journeying and progressing towards perfection. At each moment it undergoes a journey, traverses one world and enters a new one, until in the end it comes out in the form of a beautiful butterfly with wondrous wings and shining eyes.

Humans are just like this. The spirits of those who die do not become non-existent, but rather are all alive. So long as they were with the material body their development[81] was by means of the body. The body prevented extraordinary developments and amazing acts, but after death there no longer is any body. There is no longer the veil of time, space, and matter. Thus strong spirits can do amazing things by will alone. It is not possible for us to feed the entire world, but to imagine this in the world of the mind is easy for us. Humans who have left this world and no longer have the limitations of the world of nature are capable of feeding every single person in the world easily. All of these amazing feats occur through the dominance of the

spirit in the world of immateriality; by will alone they can accomplish whatever they want. This is especially true for the good and pure souls who have attained the station of sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*). God bestows upon them indescribable powers.

One of the pieces of evidence for the detachment of the soul and the permanence of the spirit after divesting itself of matter is the channeling of spirits (*iḥḍār-i arwāh*) and the gaining of knowledge through them of hidden worlds. Although this act is not permissible according to Islamic law, it nonetheless indicates the permanence of the soul and the breadth of their knowledge.

In one tradition it has been narrated that Imām Ṣādiq, upon him be peace, said:

> News of the death of one of the companions of the Commander of the Faithful reached him, and later news arrived that that man had not died. The Imām wrote a letter to that man saying, "In the Name of Allah, the Infinitely Good, the All-Merciful. News from thy district reached us that caused the panic, confusion, and alarm of thy brothers. After that, more news arrived that gave lie to the first, and this news caused our joy and happiness, bringing brightness to our eyes. However, this joy and happiness is soon to be curtailed, and soon the first piece of news will be confirmed, and will reach and overcome this joy.
>
> "So in this circumstance art thou as one who hath tasted death and then come back to life? Or art thou one who has made a plea to God to return him to this world, whose request God hath granted and who has been sent back, and as such has prepared himself, taking up what pleases him of wealth and possessions and bearing them to his permanent abode and eternal dwelling, such that he will never see possessions nor wealth other than these?
>
> "Know that night and day, whichever follow one another, endeavor with all their effort and earnestness to makes lives short and to bring possessions to annihilation and ruin, to expend the terms of life and to bring them to their end.

"Beware, O beware! How far are the minds of the negligent from this reality! How much have day and night dawned upon the people of 'Ād and Thamūd and so many other tribes and shown them their faces, until death came upon them all and they went to meet their Lord and stand before their deeds.

"Day and night are ever fresh. They pass over and leave behind all of these things that occur in this world, from ruin and decay to disease and death. They never grow old, and these two are ever ready to bring to bear the very fate that has befallen those who came before on those who come later, to bring down those deaths, degenerations, and stagnations that they had brought down upon the predecessors, and upon those who are to come. Know that thou art akin to thy brothers and like those who have left this world, having given voice to their farewell elegies after a period of life.

"Thou art akin to a body of which all the faculties have gone forth and in which is left naught but the last short breaths, which sat in wait for the Angel of Death, with ear given over at each moment to the call of the Real.

"For we take refuge in God from what we say as advice, but when it comes to action and behavior we fall short."[82]

Among the sayings of the Commander of the Faithful is the following:

O People! The Ultimate End (the meeting with God and the result of your deeds) is in front of you, and behind you is the hour (of death) challenging you and calling you in that direction. Make your burdens light that ye may arrive.

[82] As quoted in *Kitāb al-sarā'ir*, Lithographic edition, chapter on "*mustatrifat*," p. 20.

> Indeed those who have gone before you are waiting to see you.[83]

He is saying that just like the spirits of the prophets, Imāms, saints, and the pure, you should make yourself light from the weight of the burden of sins and attachments, so that you might arrive at the caravan of mercy and the encounter with God. The Resurrection will not take place unless those who remain join those who have gone before. Thus you have not been able to reach the pure spirits on account of the evil, ugly deeds that you have carried out and have kept them waiting. With beautiful deeds, praiseworthy character traits, excellent dispositions, and sound convictions, make yourself reach the caravan of the good and the pure and relieve them of their waiting. Supposing you live a long life, if this life is accompanied by purity of your heart, intention, virtue, and deed, in the life of the spirit you shall have become affiliated with the lofty world and the Highest Assembly (*mala'-i a'la*), having attained the station of purity and proximity and joining the spirits of the pure.

How often did the Commander of the Faithful, upon him be peace, remember death, making his companions aware of this subject! He would often say:

> Be prepared, may God have mercy upon you, for ye have been called. Reduce your trust and reliance (*'urjah*) upon this world, and make good what ye possess of provisions. For before you is a near and insurmountable obstacle, and dangerous, terrifying waystations, which ye must necessarily enter and upon which ye must necessarily stop. And know that the considerations of death are near to you, and it is as if its claws have been thrust into you and within it the disasters of the affair and the hateful dilemmas have assaulted you. So sever your attachments to this world and keep hold of the provisions of piety (*taqwā*)."[84]

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[83] *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon 21; in the Cairo edition, with the annotations by Muhammad 'Abduh, vol.1, p.58. The additions in parentheses are explanations by the author.

[84] 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon 202.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Sixth Discourse

The Act of the Angel of Death Is God's Act

Allah, the Most Wise, in His Noble Book said,

> *Say: "The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls: then shall ye be brought back to your Lord."*[85]

In this noble verse, God, Majestic and Exalted is He, attributes the seizing of the spirit to the Angel of Death, namely Isrā'īl. In the honorable verse that we previously discussed, God attributes the seizing of the spirit directly to Himself: "*It is God that takes the souls (of men) at death.*"[86] In another verse the seizing of the spirit is attributed not to one specific angel but to the angels: "*He is the irresistible, (watching) from above over His worshippers, and He sets guardians over you. At length, when death approaches one of you, Our angels take his soul, and they never fail in their duty.*[87]

In a fourth verse, greetings of peace are related to the angels who seize the spirits of pure people: "*Those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity, saying (to them), 'Peace be on you; enter ye the Garden, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world).'*"[88] In yet another verse from the same chapter, the seizing of the spirits of the unjust, which is accompanied by severity and the summons to hell, is also attributed to the angels.[89] In these verses, as can be observed, the seizing of the spirit is attributed to God in some, to the Angel of Death in others, and to the angels in others, and these angels seize the

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[85] Qur'an 32: 11.
[86] Qur'an 39: 42.
[87] Qur'an 6: 61.
[88] Qur'an 16: 32.
[89] Qur'an 16: 28.

spirits of the good and the pure in one way and seize the spirits of the tyrannical and unjust in another.

How are we to draw a unified conclusion from these seemingly contradictory verses? [In other words] who is the seizer of spirit? What is the meaning of attributing this act to each category of angels mentioned above? Are these verses in contradiction with one another?

These verses present an important principle, which is one of the firm principles of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*). The holy religion of Islam is based on Unity of Essence, Attributes, and Acts. Unity of Essence means that in all the worlds of being, there is only one independent Being, Subsistent unto Himself, and that Being is the Holy Essence of the Giver of Existence, Majestic and Exalted is He, and the being of all other existents is shadow-like (*dhillī*) and derivative and secondary (*ṭaba'ī*). Unity of the Attributes means that in all the worlds of being and existence there is only one Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Life, and Absolute Power, and likewise for all the rest of the Attributes. These Attributes belong only to the Essence of the Real, and the attributes of all existents are the ray and shadow of the Attributes of God and have no independence of their own.

Unity of Acts (*tawḥīd-e 'af'ālī*) means that in the entire universe and the world of existence there is only one independent, self-subsistent act, and the remaining acts are the rays of that independent act. They are all dependent upon the Necessary Being, and while they have a relation to contingent beings, they are ultimately related to the Lord, Majestic and Exalted is He.

This means that actions that emanate from any being are the manifestation of the actions of the Lord, Majestic and Exalted is He, and that all acts actually belong to God. It is by God's command and His permission that those actions come into existence in that being. In other words, such actions, thanks to their manifestation, become related to individual beings.

Thus, in reality, an act that emanates from any being, while attributed to that being, is ultimately attributed to God, not only in a horizontal manner, but also in a vertical manner. This is

because that being and God have not accomplished that act independently of each other, such that they do not share with one another in bringing it about. Rather, firstly and essentially that act has emanated from the Source of act and the Supreme Being, which is the Holy Essence of God, and only secondarily and accidentally has it come about from this being.

The philosopher [Mullā Hādī] Sabzawārī in a passage consisting of several verses [of the Qur'an] says,

> All beings are essentially the signs and mirrors (*mara'i*) of the Essence of the Real, and they signify His Being and narrate the story of His Majesty and Beauty. Every single being and each particular noun signifies His Essence according to its divine and actual coinage (*waḍ'*), not according to conventional and artificial signification. This is because signification, if it be horizontal, disappears, as opposed to vertical signification, which arises from the cause-effect relation and exists with the essence of the existence in the very substance (*ḥāq*) of its being.[90]

On the basis of Sabzawārī's statement it must be said that the Angel of Death, like a mirror, signifies the Holy Essence of the Loving Lord, and all other angels that seize spirits are the mirrors of the Angel of Death. All of them are in union (*ittiḥād*) with the Holy Essence of the Creator, Exalted is His Glorious Status. Rather, they are identical to Him, and in the station of action no separation or difference (*baynūnat*) between them can be conceived at all.

The act of seizing spirits originates from the Holy Essence of the Creator, and initially is manifested in the mirror of the

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[90] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī (1212–1289/1797–1873) was a student and commentator on Mullā Ṣadrā and the author of many works on philosophy and commentary on the Qur'an. His best-known work is *Manẓūmah* and *Sharh-i manẓūmah*. He also wrote eloquent mystical poetry. This is a translation of several verses of the *Manẓūmah* of *Sabzawari*, the chapter on Divine Speech, Nasiri Edition, pp. 177–178. A new edition of this work was published in 1995. See *Sharh al-manẓūmah* (Qom: Nab Publications, 1995), 2 Vols. See also, *The Metaphysics of Sabzawari*, translated by M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, New York: Caravan Books, 1977.

being of the Angel of Death. Then from the Angel of Death it (the act of seizing the spirit) manifests and dawns from the Angel of Death and is delegated to the other angels according to their stations and status, until finally it becomes manifest in a group of angels whose level and existential capacity is least of all. Since these acts are in vertical relation to one another, in reality they constitute one act. Therefore in the act of seizing spirits, the Holy Essence of the Lord is independent, and no assistant or auxiliary to Him in this act can be posited at all, even though the act takes place at the hands of the Angel of Death or the other angels. It is for this reason that the Glorious Qur'an attributes subjects such as the death, life, and sustenance of existents and celestial and terrestrial events to the Essence of the Lord, considering Him to be Unique in these acts, whilst at the same time attributing them to their lower or higher causes.[91] For example, while discussing the creation (of human artifacts) it says, "*...and God created you and what you make...*"[92] and in another verse it says, "*That then is God your Lord; there is no god but He, the Creator of everything. So serve Him, for He is Guardian over everything,*"[93] or in a third verse it says, "*Say! 'God is the Creator of everything, and He is the One, the Omnipotent.'*"[94]

With reference to possession and ruling, sometimes the possession and ruling of all existents is attributed to God alone, as in, "*To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and of the earth, and all that is in them, and He is powerful over everything.*"

There are many verses that are composed of these very words.[95]

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[91] For more information see *al-Mizān fī tafsir al-Qur'an,* p. 72, the discussion "the Qur'an's confirmation of the general law of causality," and p. 406, the discussion "a word on the attribution of human creations to God, may He be Exalted."
[92] Qur'an 37: 96.
[93] Qur'an 6: 102.
[94] Qur'an 13: 16.
[95] Qur'an 5: 120.

In another place the Qur'an attributes ruling (*mulk*) to the family of Abraham: "*...do they envy mankind for what God hath given them of his bounty? But We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.*"[96]

With reference to David, upon him be peace, it says, "*We strengthened his kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgment in speech and decision.*"[97]

There are many other similar verses with the same theme.

The [relationship between the] act of God and that of possible beings is just like the [relationship between] the sun shining in a large mirror, which is then reflected in numerous smaller mirrors. In this case the light and rays of light (*tasha'shu'*) firstly and essentially belong specifically to the sun, and are secondly and accidentally attributed to these mirrors.

The pre-eternal Will of God becomes differentiated in the Angel of Death and then in the lower angels, which, in accordance with their rank, [are assigned to] seize the spirit of believers, infidels, or hypocrites, the just or the corrupt. Thus these manifestations are in a vertical relation to one another, not a horizontal relation such that each one individually or all of them collectively seize the spirit. The Angel of Death is the locus of manifestation of the Divine Name "the Constrictor," "the Bringer of Death" (al-Mumīt), and the other angels are partial loci of manifestation for this Name.

The Commander of the Faithful ['Ali] in response to the complaints of a heretic who said that the Qur'an and traditions are self-contradictory—such as the contradiction between the verses about the taking of souls—said,

> ...Know that God, is more Exalted and Majestic than to participate (*mobāsharat*) in these affairs by His own Hand. The act of God's angels is the act of God, because they act by the command of God. Thus God

[96] Qur'an 4: 54.
[97] Qur'an 38: 20.

selects a number from among the angels to be the emissary (*safir*) and intermediary between Him and His creations. These are the very same number to whom God refers saying, "*God chooses of the angels Messengers and of mankind: surely God is All-hearing.*"[98] So as for people who obeyed God, the angels put in charge of seizing their spirits are God's Angels of Mercy, and as for those who were disobedient, the Angels of Torment and Hardship (*naqmat*) shall be in charge of seizing their spirits.

The Angel of Death has helpers and assistants from among the angels of mercy and the angels of torment, which seize spirits by his command. Their act is his act, and whatever they accomplish is attributed to him. Therefore, the act of these angels is the act of the Angel of Death, and the act of the Angel of Death is the act of God. This is because it is God who causes to die and seizes the spirits and souls at the hands of whichever of the angels that He wills. He grants and prevents, rewards and punishes at the hands of whichever of His servants that He wills. In truth, the act of the trustees of God is identical to the act of God, just as He says, "*Yet ye will not, unless Allah willeth.*"[99] [100]

The Nature of the Seizing of the Spirit

One explanation is as follows. The manner of the seizing of the soul of many individuals in different places and in different ways in a single instant by the Angel of Death is precisely the multiplicity of one act with the preservation of its unity in different locations and circumstances. This is just like the multiplicity of the light of the sun in multiple places and houses, each of which is benefiting from the light of the sun to its own extent. It is also like the sending of sound waves from a single

[98] Qur'an 22: 75.
[99] Qur'an 76: 30 and 81: 29. Pickthall, partial.
[100] Ṭabarsī, *Kitāb al ihtijāj*, vol.1, p. 367.

emitter to multiple receivers, or the sending of electricity, which manifests in millions of electrical appliances in different ways, even though a single force has been emitted from the source, being weakened by transformers so that it reaches large and small appliances at the voltage appropriate to them. No one can object to the unity of the act in these cases, for a single act has been made strong or weak by transforming devices and has become dressed in multiplicity and has assumed various forms, though nonetheless remaining one.

The greatest angel of the Lord who has the responsibility of seizing souls and whose name is Isrā'īl is like the energy source in the example. He is like the sun with its rays, which is one and in the summit of the sky. He is the Name of God "the Bringer of Death" (al-Mumīt) and "the Constrictor." Similarly, Isrāfīl, who gives life to bodies and bestows the spirit on existents, is the name "Giver of Life" (al-Muḥyī) of God, and Jibra'il, which bestows knowledge, is the name "the All-Knowing" (al-'Ālim), the "All-Seeing" (al-Baṣīr), and "the All-Aware" (al-Khabīr) of God, and Mikā'īl who is in charge of bestowing sustenance, is the name "the Sustainer" (al-Razzāq and al-Rāziq) of God. By means of more and more particular angels that Universal Name becomes divided (*munsha'ib*) until it reaches each of the particular angels who have been made responsible for a particular action such as giving life, bringing death, bestowing knowledge, or giving sustenance.

Another explanation is as follows: the act of the Angel of Death is not a material act. He is an immaterial, spiritual being. Immateriality and being spiritual have no similarity with matter and the conditions and effects that apply to matter. It was mentioned that the seizing of the spirit is from the inner dimension of human existence, not the outward dimension; the Angel of Death, Isrā'īl, who is himself a celestial being, seizes the spirit using celestial and spiritual capabilities, not material power. To give an example, intellection is a single spiritual action, which is carried out by millions of individuals in a single instant, though since it is not material there is no disturbance (*tazāḥom*) to or conflict with it. However, if many people sit in

a place that has only the capacity for one person, disturbance and conflict occur, since the case is material. The faculties of thought, imagination, and memory are not material. Therefore, since the act of the Real, Majestic and Exalted is He, and of the Angel of Death and the rest of the angels, is not material, but rather is a single act that manifests from different mirrors and openings, no contradiction nor opposition can be conceived.

The philosopher Sabzawārī, in verses on the nature of the arising of multiplicity from the perspective of the School of Illumination (*ishrāqī*),[101] says,

> In this very way and manner the propitious lights,[102] such as the light of the being of the Angel of Death, which he takes from the Light of Lights and which is manifested in him, accept multiplicity in descending levels according to multiplication. On the basis of this one must notice the illuminations of lights that come about on low levels, and their witnessing of lofty lights and dominant immaterial beings. The proof of this is that immaterial beings do not have the veil of matter or the effects of matter, such as time and space, and they are not veiled from one another. This veil belongs specifically to material beings and their effects. Therefore, in each one of the immaterial beings the forms of the other immaterial beings are reflected and each one of them is as a mirror in relation to the others.[103]

It is narrated that Imām Ṣādiq said,

[101] On the School of Illumination (*ishrāq*) and its founder, Shaykh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, see S. H. Nasr, "Suhrawardi," in M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Wisbaden, 1963; Hossein Ziai, "Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardi: Founder of the Illuminationist School," in S. H. Nasr & Oliver Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, pp. 434–464 and 465–496, London, 2001; and Mehdi Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, London, 1995.

[102] Namely the light shining from one immaterial being upon another.

[103] Translation of verses from the *Sharh-i manẓūmah of Sabzawārī*, Nasiri edition, pp. 190–191.

> It was said to the Angel of Death, "How dost thou seize the spirits in a single moment while some of them are in the east and some are in the west?"
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> The Angel of Death, upon him be peace, said, "I [simply] call them and they respond."
>
> Then the Angel of Death said, "Verily, this world is between my hands just as a bowl (*qaṣ'ah*) is between the hands of one of you, who takes from it what he pleases. This world for me is like a *dirham* in the palm of the hand of one of you, turning it as he wills."[104]

It was also asked of that Imām about the attribution of the seizing of spirits to God, to the Angel of Death, and to the other angels, and the manner by which the spirits of different people in different places are seized in a single moment. He said: God, Blessed and Exalted is He, has appointed helpers for the Angel of Death who seize the spirits, just like a police chief to whom have been appointed human helpers and assistants. The police chief sends out his helpers and assistants, each to accomplish his own task, when the occasion arises. Thus,

> ...the angels take them, and the Angel of Death takes them from the angels along with what he himself seizes, and God, Majestic and Exalted is He, takes them from the Angel of Death.[105]
>
> The Angels of wrath and mercy seize the souls of the oppressors and the believers respectively, that is to say they take their spirits unto themselves and attract them, and the Angel of Death takes their spirits through the intermediary of the angels and attracts them unto himself together with the spirits of individuals, which he takes without intermediary and attracts unto himself, and God, Majestic

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[104] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Man la yahdaruhu al-faqih*, chapter on "Washing the Dead," Najaf Edition, vol. 1, p. 80.
[105] Ibid.

> and Exalted is He, takes the spirits through the intermediary of the Angel of Death and attracts them.[106]

In this narration the Imām says that the Angel of Death takes the spirits of some without the intermediary of particular angels, and he is himself in charge of and participates in the act (*motaṣaddī va mobāsher*) of seizing their spirits. God willing we shall discuss this later.

In another long narration, the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali] in response to an interlocutor who asked about the different attributions of the seizing of the spirit, after giving an exhaustive answer to a certain important point, says,

> "It is sufficient for you to know that God is the Giver of Life and the Bringer of Death (*al-Muḥyī wa'l-Mumīt*), and that He takes souls by the hands of any of His creation whomsoever He wills, whether they be angels or other than them."

> The man replied, "You brought ease and comfort to my soul, may God bring comfort to your soul (*farajta 'anni, farraja Allah 'anka*), O Commander of the Faithful! May God benefit the Muslims through thee."

As one might notice, here the Commander of the Faithful adds a phrase, namely "other than them." That is to say He also seizes the soul by the hand of other than the angels. It must be seen what the meaning of this phrase is. Thus 'Ali has informed us that the seizing of souls may also take place without the function and participation (*motaṣaddī va mobāsherat*) of the angels, and so we cannot dismiss this possibility. There are two possible interpretations for this statement.

First: it is possible that the phrase "other than them" is used in conjunction with "the angels" as the literal meaning of the words seems to indicate. This means that God also seizes the souls by the hands of certain of His creations that are not angels. These creations are beings that are higher, more noble, and

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106 Ibid, 1, p. 82.

more dignified and dearer than the angels, and are called in Qur'anic language "the lofty ones" (*'ālīn*).

God, reprimanding Satan, who disobeyed and failed to prostrate to Adam, said, *"O Iblis, what prevented thee to bow thyself before that I created with My own hands? Hast thou waxed proud, or art thou of the lofty ones?"*[107]

Since the command to prostrate was given to all of the angels, it becomes clear that the "lofty ones" were not angels who were commanded to prostrate. Rather, just as is clear from their name, there were beings of high status and magnitude. They are the "ones made pure [by God]" (*mukhlaṣīn*) to whose holy level Satan has no access. The "lofty ones" refers to the spirits of the good and pure of the prophets, saints, and Imāms, who have entered the station of divine safety and security (*amn wa amān*). They have taken up their place *"in a sure abode, in the presence of a King Omnipotent,"*[108] and have attained the degrees of sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and divine proximity. In their progress towards the Holy Essence of the Lord they have reached the Universal Divine Names and have been granted the Universal Divine Qualities, attaining absolute annihilation in the Essence of God, Majestic and Exalted is He, passing even beyond sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and becoming pure (*khāliṣ*). Since they have been annihilated in the Universal Divine Names and Qualities, and the concomitants of the manifestation and dawning of those Names and Qualities are present in the mirror of their vast being, thus by God's permission and command they may bring to life, bring death, give sustenance, and accomplish all of the other acts that proceed from God. They are the complete and perfect locus of manifestation of the Divine Names. They bring to life through the manifestation of the Name "Bringer of Life" (al-Muḥyī), and they bring death through the manifestation of the Name "Bringer of Death" (al-Mumīt).

This is precisely what the Qur'an explicitly states when it says that Jesus, upon him be peace, revived the dead, gave sight

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[107] Qur'an 38: 75.
[108] Qur'an 54: 55.

to one born blind, and healed the leper—*"I will also heal the blind and the leper, and bring to life the dead, by the leave of God"*[109]—because, like Isrāfīl, who is the locus of manifestation of the Name "Bringer of Life" (al-Muḥyī) and bestows souls on bodies, Christ was also the locus of manifestation of this Name of the Lord. Likewise, Moses, who cast his staff and it became a serpent, was a locus of manifestation of this Name. Or the story of the coming to life of birds in the mountain peaks at the supplication of Abraham is of this same kind. The reports of some of the Infallible Imāms, upon them be peace, and the Messenger of God, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him and his progeny, are just like this. For example when Imām 'Ali ibn Musā al-Riḍā, upon him be peace, pointed to the painting of a lion on a curtain in the court of Ma'mūn and it came to life and ravished and ate an insulter, it was from the Names "the Bringer of Life" and "the Bringer of Death" (al-Muḥyī and a'l-Mumīt).[110]

Trustworthy individuals have related that one of the teachers in Najaf said,

> I used to doubt some of the sayings of Ḥājj Mīrzā 'Alī Āqā Qāḍi Ṭabāṭabā'ī,[111] though I did not tell anyone about it. The late Qāḍī used to go frequently to the Kufa and Sahlah mosques to worship. One day outside the mosque I ran into the late Qāḍi, may God have mercy upon him, and after greeting each other, we sat beneath those tall walls behind

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[109] Qur'an 3: 49.

[110] This story is related in *'Uyun akhbar al-Rida'* in the Fourth Chapter of the Lithograph edition, p. 345, and it has also been narrated in other trustworthy books. A similar story has also been narrated about Imām Musa ibn Ja'far, upon him be peace, in Ibn Shahrashub (489–588/1096–1192). *Manaqib-i 'Ali Abī Ṭālib, Manāqib,* Vol. 2, pp. 364–5 of the Lithograph edition. See also *Danesh nameh-ye bozorg-i Islami,* Vol. 4.

[111] Ḥājj Mīrzā 'Alī Āqā Qāḍi Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1285–1366/1867–1948) was one of the most spiritually gifted Sufi masters and eminent scholars of jurisprudence, ethics, and *Ḥadīth,* who lived in Najaf most of his life. He trained many outstanding students, including 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭbā'ī and 'Allāmah Ṭihrānī.

the mosque to rest, and the late Qāḍi spoke to me of gnosis and the way of the Truth.

I said to myself in my heart: "We really are in doubt and confusion and do not know what is going on. If our whole life passes in this way then woe be unto us! If it be real and not come to us, then woe be unto us! On the other hand we do not know if it is really correct so that we might go after it." While I was in this state a large snake come out of a hole and slithered in front of us, moving parallel to the wall of the mosque. There are many snakes in that area and people see them frequently, though it has not been heard of until now that someone be bitten. At the very moment that the snake reached the point in front of us and I became completely terrified, the late Qāḍi, God have mercy upon him, pointed at the snake and said, "Die, by God's leave!" The snake immediately lay still in its place.

The late Qāḍi, without paying any attention, continued the conversation that we had been having, and then we got up and went inside the mosque. The late Qāḍi first prayed two cycles of prayer in the middle of the mosque and then went to his room (for he had a room inside the mosque). I accomplished some of the acts of worship specific to that mosque and while doing this it suddenly came into my mind, "Was this illusion and magic, or was it real? Would it not be better for me to go and see if the snake is dead or not?"

When I had finished the acts of worship of that mosque, I went and saw that the snake was indeed motionless and lying right there, and I became overwhelmed and ashamed and returned to the mosque to pray a few more cycles of prayer. I was unable to, and I thought to myself, "If these issues are real, why do we never pay them any attention?" After a while the late Qāḍi came out of his room and left the mosque to set out for Najaf, and I also went out. In the mosque of Kufa we again ran into one another, and the late man smiled at me and said, "Well, my dear sir! Did you try it out? Did you try it out?"

Indeed, it is well worth contemplating closely whether the wondrous and strange things that the Commander of the Faithful, upon him be peace, brought about with the hand of *wilāyah* during battles and outside of them were accomplished with the assistance of the angels of the Lord, or whether his holy spirit, which was above the station of Isrā'īl, and the other angels brought nigh to God, accomplished these miracles by the power of the Will of the Lord, which was manifest in his holy being without the intermediacy of the angels.

The second possibility is that the phrase *"other than them"* (*ghayrahum*) is used in conjunction to the words "whomsoever He wills," in which case the resultant meaning would be: God, Majestic and Exalted is He, seizes spirits by means of whichever of His creations He wills among the angels, and He also seizes spirits without the intermediacy of the angels.

In this case it is possible that what is meant by "other than the angels" is God's own Holy Being, although in this case the referent of this sense is still those *"lofty ones"* through whose intermediacy God seizes spirits. This is because the *"lofty ones"* are individuals who have been annihilated in the Divine Essence and have become actualized in the Universal Divine Names. Thus it can truly be said that their act is precisely the act of God, and therefore one can speak of the seizing of spirits by them as the seizing of spirits by God.

It has been narrated that Imām Bāqir, upon him be peace, said, "'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn [Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn Sajjād] used to say: 'When I hear God say, *"Have they not seen how We come to the land reducing it of its outlying parts?"*[112] my soul becomes generous in rushing hastily towards death, for it refers to the death of scholars.'"[113] This means that since God Himself seizes the spirits of the *'ulamā'* of the community, my soul

[112] Qur'an 13:41.

[113] Here the Imām has interpreted the word *aṭrāf* to be the plural of *ṭarif* or *ṭaraf*, meaning "having great and generous parents," and the meaning of *'ulamā'* comes from this. *'Uṣūl al-kāfī'* Vol. 1, the "Book of the Excellence of the *'Ulamā'*," chapter on the *faqd* of the *'ulamā'*, Ḥaydari Edition, p. 37.

hastens towards death. which approaches our family with speed. and in the submitting of itself. it generously gives itself.

An important conclusion can be drawn from the forgoing discussions. namely that individual believers possess different ranks. The spirits of those whose faith is weak are seized by weak angels who only overcome that believer at the time of death. The spirit of those whose faith is stronger is seized by stronger angels. since stronger faith implies a stronger spirit. Then there are some believers whose faith has reached such an extent that no particular angel is strong enough to seize their spirits. In this case. Isrā'īl himself. who is one of the angels brought nigh to God. seizes the spirit. For that degree of believers who have been purified by God and reached the station of *mukhlaṣīn*. the seizing of the soul takes place at the hands of the Holy Essence of the Lord Himself. Majestic and Exalted is He.

Now it must be seen why the seizings of the soul of the believer and of the disbeliever differ. Why does the seizing of the soul of the prophets occur in a lofty manner. and of the believing. pure-hearted people in a beautiful manner. while for the disbeliever it is nasty and hateful?

It has been narrated that Abraham. the intimate Friend of God (*Khalīl Allah*). upon him be peace. said to the Angel of Death, "Canst thou show thyself to me in the very form with which you seize the spirit of the wicked person?"

The Angel of Death said. "Thou hast not the endurance to bear it."

Abraham. upon him be peace. said. "Nay. I have!"

The Angel of Death said. "Turn thy face away from me and then look at me."

Abraham looked at the Angel of Death in this way. Suddenly he saw a dark-faced man with an exceedingly detestable appearance present in front of him. Abraham swooned and then regained consciousness and said: "If the wicked person saw nothing but this (that is. this form of you) at

the time of death, indeed it would be sufficient torment and difficulty for him."[114]

Thus if Isrā'īl becomes present to seize the spirit of the wicked person in this manner, then naturally he can become manifest for the believer in an attractive form, such that the one on the point of death would not be able to stand the strength of pleasure and attraction and would spontaneously surrender his soul. If a terrestrial beauty like the beauty of Joseph could steal the consciousness, just as it did to the Egyptian women who cut their own hands, what would a celestial beauty do? It is sufficient to steal away the soul in one moment.

Thus it is not far-fetched for us to say that for seizing the spirits of the good, Isrā'īl manifests with such heart-adorning beauty and with the fragrance of attractive perfume that the believer is left incapacitated and in a single moment the bird of his spirit takes flight.

It is not that the Angel of Death and his helpers among the other angels have different quiddities such that whenever they want, their existence takes the form of a certain quiddity. Rather, since they are celestial, disengaged beings, they are just like a clear and bright mirror, which does not show itself but rather shows the other; the reflection of the perfections or faults of whatever individual on the point of death whom they appear in front of appears in them. Thus the one on the verge of death beholds his own celestial form, qualities, and characteristics in their form, whether they be good or distasteful. *In reality he is seeing the beauty or ugliness of his own rational soul in them.*

Since good individuals among the believers differ in their qualities and perfections—in some of them worship being dominant, in others generosity, in others knowledge, and in others self-sacrifice and courage, and so forth—their celestial beauty is different and takes different beautiful forms. Some of them, namely those in whom the love of God is intense, have an extremely attractive celestial form. It is from this perspective that although the forms that the angels' seizing spirits take are

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[114] This is a summary of a narration from *Biḥār al-anwār*, the Akhundi edition, Vol. 6, p. 143.

all beautiful, they are nonetheless different from one another. In a similar way, as for the evil people among the disbelievers and the hypocrites, in some denial and rejection are dominant, in others malice and antagonism, in others miserliness and parsimony (*bukhl*), and in others violence, and in accordance with these forms taken by the angels, the seizing of souls is different.

The reason for all of these differences is that the Angel of Death and all other angels under his command seize the soul of the human from the inner, celestial dimension. In each person whatever dispositions and characteristics he may have are manifested there, and from that manifestation they affect the senses of the person at the point of death, and they see themselves there. Of course, this celestial form also accompanies the human in this world, though it changes as a result of good or bad deeds or faith or disbelief, and it is possible for one form to be transformed into another. This change occurs in this very world, which is the abode of action, not the abode of reckoning. However, in the state of death it is no longer changeable, and the result of those transformations and changes in this world is the fixed, unchanging celestial form at the point of death. This point must be understood: that the angels are special types of being, in contrast to devils, humans, animals, and other beings, and they do not transform from one quiddity to another and never take on the garments of matter. Satan and the angels are only able to bring about a bad or good effect on the human senses, and on this basis humans witness them through their senses in different forms. It is not that they actually take on different forms and come to exist with the different quiddities of humans and animals.

The supposition of the ability to transform into different quiddities is against philosophical proofs and Qur'anic verses and narrations. In the Qur'anic commentary *al-Mizān*, the rejection of this theory has been presented in an eloquent manner.[115]

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[115] *al-Mizān*, volume 8, p. 61.

The spirits of the good and the pure at the mere sight of the beautiful face and attractive and magnificent countenance of Isrā'īl empty their bodies and do not even have the feeling of death. Suppose that you are riding in a car that takes you through numerous streets in each of which you witness something unpleasant, until suddenly a door opens and this car enters an enchanting garden with kind and friendly people, salubrious foods and drinks, and beautiful, vivifying melodies. You do not feel any unpleasantness at the transition to this garden, and you find yourself there with complete ease and hardly even have a sense of transition at the moment you enter it.

However, the nature of the seizing of the souls of the Friends of God (*awliyā'*) by God and through the lofty ones who are those made pure is beyond explanation. We saw that Imām Zayn al-'Ābidin said, "When I remember that God himself takes the souls of the knowers (*'ulamā'*) with His own hands, my soul generously hastens to the death that is coming towards me and my family."

The Commander of the Faithful, upon him be peace, has promised that he will become present at the bedside of people at the time of the seizing of the soul. With this promise hearts become eager for death, and souls are constantly overflowing with love and desire to behold his celestial form and the kindness, love, and mercy that reaches the believers from him, and are eager to meet him and always in the remembrance of him.

Now if the Commander of the Faithful, upon him be peace, who is one of the lofty ones and those made pure (*mukhlaṣīn*), or rather is the highest of the members of this group, were to want to seize the soul with his own hand, which is the hand of God, [could you imagine] what it would be like?!

However, the faith of the believer must have reached a level such that even an angel brought nigh to God could not seize his soul. It is then that the seizing of the soul at the blessed hand of the Commander of the Faithful will take place.

May God make us and you among those who succeed in attaining this praiseworthy station and lofty degree, by Muhammad and his pure progeny, and may the blessings of God be upon Muhammad and his family.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Seventh Discourse

The Capturing of the Soul and Witnessing of Death Is the Affair of the Non-Manifest World

Why, then, when (the soul) cometh up to the throat (of the dying)
And ye are at that moment looking—
And We are nearer unto him than ye are, but ye see not—
Why then, if ye are not in bondage (unto Us),
Do ye not force it back, if ye are truthful?
Thus if he is of those brought nigh,
Then breath of life, and plenty, and a Garden of delight.
And if he is of those on the right hand,
Then (the greeting) "Peace be unto thee" from those on the right hand.
But if he is of the rejecters, the erring,
Then the welcome will be boiling water
And roasting at hell-fire.
Lo! this is certain truth.
Therefore (O Muhammad) praise the name of thy Lord, the Tremendous.[116]

The angels are detached beings: hence their proximity to or distance from God is not subject to time and space. Therefore, the Angel of Death does not come from the material world in order to seize humans' souls, but it captures the souls from the realm of Dominion, for the human soul belongs to the world of Dominion, and in that world, there is no material veil. The veil of matter belongs to the world of nature and matter because the material world is in need of time and space. Therefore, behind the veil of space and time, the beings become hidden from each

[116] Qur'an 56: 83–96.

other. We are not aware of the past or future, or other places. Why? Because in between, there is the veil of space and time.

The invisibility of creatures and beings from each other is specific to material beings and is not intelligible among spiritual beings of the Dominion. Therefore, the reason that the Angel of Death captures human souls from the inward (*bāṭin*) is that the quality of its being and the quality of the soul are both heavenly and spiritual. Hence, the capturing of the soul is not visible, and cannot be perceived through the senses that connect us to the material world. The human being himself does not perceive the seizing of his soul through the outward senses, nor are the people present around the dying person informed of the arrival of the Angel of Death. God says: *"Is it this Statement that ye scorn, And make denial thereof your livelihood?"*[117]

Do you doubt this statement of God that is hidden in the Noble Qur'an, and take it lightly? Do you get your spiritual fulfillment by denying the Qur'an? Instead of benefiting from this vast spread of the truth and spirituality and quenching your thirst by drinking from the pure spring of the sciences of the Qur'an, you spend your energy denying and rejecting it, and wish to quench your thirst by drinking this dreadful wine of pride

If you do not believe in God and think that God's words are meaningless, or if you do not believe in Resurrection, reward, and punishment, then how is it that when one of you is dying, others gather and look at him idly? You are closer to him than his own soul. Why do you not return his soul to him; why do you not realize that you cannot?

If you do not find yourself under domination of the unseen world, God's Dominion and judgment, if you do not see yourself as subject to God's command and indebted to Him, and seek all the power in this limited world of matter, why is it that you do not return the dying person's soul to him and prevent his death? If you are honest and sincere in what you say and insist on it, then return [the dying man's soul to] him. Indeed!

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[117] Qur'an 56: 81–82.

At that moment we are closer to him than himself. The Angel of Death and other angels that perform their mission are servants from the World of Command, and are not seen by ordinary human beings. In such situations, people are divided into three categories.

First: the people who are brought nigh to God (*muqarrabīn*) who have transcended the material world and the Hereafter and have reached the station of nearness to God and are at peace in the sacred Precinct of God. Their place is in paradise and their food is spiritual and heavenly flowers. Revitalizing breezes from the sacred Precinct of the Lord blow over their faces, and the fragrance of the blossoms of intimacy and the joy of meeting His Sacred Presence intoxicate them.

Second are those people of the right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*), people with beautiful deeds who have not been entangled in the darkness of the world of pride. They have not reached the station of the people brought nigh to God (*muqarrabīn*), but they are invited from the right side, which is a metaphor for salvation and felicity. With their sincere love for God, with utmost sincerity and purity of heart (*ikhlāṣ*), they have spent their lives on earth and have acted in accordance with their intellect and primordial nature, and observed the laws of religion. Therefore, they have entered the abode of the Divine Name "Peace" (Salām*)* and send greetings to the Prophet from such station.

Third: the people of the left (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*), who are the ones that are astray and the deniers. These people have been intoxicated by the material world, and have wasted their life in arrogance and ignorance. They have fallen, distanced from the truth and spiritual life, and spent their time denying the prophets and Friends of God, the origin, and the Resurrection, and have taken this world's existence lightly. They enter into the fire, and their food will be melted metal.

These words are the truth to such an extent that their certainty can never be denied. They are based on witnessing and sensibilities. That is the reason God addressed the Prophet saying, *"O Muhammad! Remember the Name of your God,*

Glorious and Holy is He."[118] and know that He is free from anything that contradicts His Attributes of Justice, Mercy, Majesty, and Beauty; and is beyond any deficiency, imperfection, weakness, or ignorance and their implications.

From these verses that have elaborately divided the people into three groups and have described their states and stations, one can conclude that the capturing of the soul takes place in the non-manifest realm (*bāṭin*), because God says people around the "*dying person are closer to him than himself*" and also the angels sent to capture the soul from the World of Command are closer to him: "*And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son. Be He glorified! Nay, but (those whom they call sons) are honored slaves; They speak not until He hath spoken, and they act by His command.*"[119]

God's command precedes His act of creation. This means that they are beyond and above the world of nature and matter. They are spiritual and heavenly beings who in the Realm of Divine Command follow the command of God. Similarly, the Angel of Death and his companions are also from the World of Command, and their act in capturing the soul is from the non-manifest World of Command. In another verse He says: "*Couldst thou but see when they are terrified with no escape, and are seized from near at hand.*"[120]

The meaning of "near at hand" in this verse is the human's inner being (*bāṭin*), from where angels capture his reality, which is his soul.

Man's inner being (*bāṭin*) is closer to him than his fivefold outward senses.

Suppose a group of people have gathered together, none of them aware of the other ones' thoughts and intentions. For example, you can conduct the whole of the *Ḥajj* rituals in your mind. Does the person next to you realize it? Never! Why? Because people only see your physical being, your body that

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[118] Qur'an 17: 110.
[119] Qur'an 21: 26–27.
[120] Qur'an 34: 51.

has not moved. The capturing of the soul is like this. Dreams are like this as well. Dreams and nightmares that might have temporary or permanent effects on one's soul are hidden from the people who are awake and sitting near your bed.

No one becomes aware of the joys and fears of a dying person. The fears, feats, and other perceptions of the dying person are the same. All states that the dying person experiences are spiritual and not physical. The body falls on the ground, and the spirit moves to the place that it should go. The Angel of Death only wants to capture the spirit and take it with him, and he is not concerned with the body. It is the duty of the survivors and the mourners and those who are to accompany the deceased person's body to move it and bury it with proper rites in accordance with the *Sharīʻah*. Regarding those people who deny the Day of Return (*Maʻād*) and complain, the Glorious Qur'an says, *"Nay, but they disbelieve in the encounter with their Lord. Say: 'Death's angel, who has been charged with you, shall gather you, then to your Lord you shall be returned.'"*[121]

Indeed, these people deny the meeting with their Lord and do not believe in the spiritual journey and encounter of the soul with God. "O Prophet! Tell them [that God says] '*We take your life.*' The angel that is in charge of you captures your soul and takes you away. After that you will be returned to your God."

The Angel of Death that is responsible for you transfers your soul, which is your inner reality, from the material world to the intermediate world (purgatory—*barzakh*) and abandons your body. Therefore the soul of the human being enters the intermediate world (purgatory) in its archetypal form. While living in this world, the human soul spends some time in the material world and becomes intimate with material pleasures. He is connected to the world through what his five senses acquire, and through them his soul is connected to the world. The heart is identical to the soul that finds attachment to the world more and more every day. Now it wants to leave the

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[121] Qur'an 32: 10–11.

material world and enter a realm that it is not familiar with, a realm that has no similarity to the [material] world. Since the soul has not prepared itself for the other world and has not collected the necessary provisions, he is a stranger on the path of this journey and does not know how to learn about its intricacies. The soul does not have anything to present to this new world. In the material world the man possessed money, authority, prestige, fame, friends, children, acquaintances, and followers, but in the new realm they are not worth anything. If he is not connected to his kin through God, blood relation between him and his relatives will end. [In this new realm kinship is based on and only possible through virtues and piety.] That bazaar is different from this world's bazaar. If someone's capital is ice, it is valuable in the summer but it has no value in the winter. A carpenter's mastery is valuable only where there is a need for his skill. Where an ironmaster is needed, a carpenter's profession does not have any use. Likewise an expert physician cannot present his skill in philosophical circles, no matter how skilled a physician he may be.

Man's status and importance in this world is based on means that belong to this world. When one's world is changed, it is no longer reasonable to expect any of the means and qualities to be useful in the new abode. Those means that were sought and acquired in the world by man's carnal soul are not allowed to enter the other world. They are illegitimate commodities that cannot be taken into the new world. Like a customs officer who does not allow the passage of commodities from one country to another, death confiscates and disposes of these qualities. If a person wants to take these with him, he must give them in this world to earn God's pleasure. In other words, if he wants to bring his [worldly wealth] to the Hereafter, he must spend it for the sake of God in this world. In such a case, his wealth will go to the Hereafter. By being charitable a human soul becomes purified and attains heavenly qualities, and veils are removed before his eyes. This station is in demand in the Hereafter. Commodities that are in demand there are useful things, such as belief in God's Unity (*tawhīd*), justice (*'adl*),

piety, fear of God (*taqwā*), walking on the path of the Truth, honesty and sincerity in action (*ṣidq*), respect for other people's rights, and steadfastness in servanthood towards God (*'ubūdīyat*). There they will ask a man what gift he has brought with himself. They will ask him for a pure heart and pure faith. If he presents all the commodities of this world, they will not accept them from him. They will ask him what he did to gain God's satisfaction and pleasure.

That world is the realm of Divine Unity, the world of reckoning and justice, as well as punishment and rewards. It is not the material world and does not have any of its qualities, and the commodities of this world are not in demand there, and no one accepts bribes. What matters for man is the purity of his inner being (*bāṭin*), his manner and proper conduct, and good deeds. He who did not become familiar with the requirements of the Hereafter will be a stranger there, as though he is blind. If he takes one step, he may be destroyed. The glorious Qur'an has described the states of the oppressors in death in an amazing way:

> *And who does greater evil than he who forges against God a lie, or says, "To me it has been revealed," when naught has been revealed to him, or he who says, "I will send down the like of what God has sent down"? If thou couldst only see when the evildoers are in the agonies of death, and the angels are stretching out their hands: "Give up your souls! Today you shall be recompensed with the chastisement of humiliation for what you said untruly about God, waxing proud against His signs."*
>
> *Now you have come to Us one by one, as We created you upon the first time, and you have left what We conferred on you behind your backs. We do not see with you your intercessors, those you asserted to be associates in you; the bond between you is now broken; that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you.*[122]

[122] Qur'an 6: 93–94.

One would wish to be present and observe the state of oppressors at the time of death and how angels spread their arms to capture their souls, addressing them in the following manner:

> Free your soul and let it go! Today you will be punished because of the unjust words you said about God, and your souls will be abased. Indeed you have arrived here alone as you were when we created you. You did not benefit from what we bestowed upon you in the world. Your friends that you were assuming would have come with you are not present. Indeed there is a split between you and them. Whatever you thought would help you on a day like this, has distanced from you and slipped into a separated realm far away.

These verses emphasize that everything that one trusted in and relied on in the material world disappears at the time of death. Two of those are particularly worth mentioning here. First is wealth and possessions, and second are one's relatives, friends, and acquaintances. These two assets help man in life and fulfill his needs in this world. Man turns to them in times of need. At the time of death the angels will remind them that God said: "*Now you have come to Us one by one, as We created you upon the first time...*"[123]

They will remind man how pure he was at the time of birth without any possessions as though telling him he should return to God as pure as when he was born. They shall remind him that God gave him wealth to use for spiritual perfection and to help fellow human beings. Instead he abused this God-given wealth and destroyed himself. Then the angels will remind him of what God says to him: "*...you have left what We conferred on you behind your backs.*"[124]

As to relatives and friends who used to help man in the world, God says: "*We do not see with you your intercessors,*

[123] Qur'an 6: 94.
[124] Ibid.

those you asserted to be associates in you..."[125] Here is a realm wherein "We see you alone in the true sense of the word." Then the angels will explain the reason for this loneliness: "*...the bond between you is now broken.*"[126]

Our world is the realm of the terrestrial kingdom and is illusive and transient. The celestial abode is the realm of Dominion (*malakūt*) and is the high abode of the Truth. It is eternal where actions and transactions are based on truths (*ḥaqā'iq*) and realization. In our world actions and transactions are based on contingencies, interests, expediencies, and illusions and imaginations. Our abode is the abode of potentialities. The Dominion is the realm of actualization, and the abode of reckoning, and not action, while our abode is the realm of action without reckoning. Therefore, since there are inherent differences between these two abodes, separation between the two is natural and expected, as the Qur'an says: "*...that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you.*"[127]

Man thinks that the Hereafter is the continuation of this world, and its affairs are like the affairs of this world. He leaves exorbitant wills and asks his survivors to decorate his tomb with mirrors and flowers, not realizing that these are the ornaments of this world and do not belong to the world of God's Dominion, towards which man journeys after death. He must take gifts that are worthy of that abode, such as righteous offspring, his charitable acts, knowledge that he leaves behind, care of the orphans, the blessings emanating from the knowledge he has shared with others, piety in society, prayer, contemplation of the Qur'an, and finally the asking of forgiveness for his sins. These are what will be useful and will bring blessings and mercy on the deceased person, not taking flowers. This sort of thing is even harmful to the soul of the dead and disturbs it. Construction of luxurious tombs is

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

discouraged in Islam. Since man has experienced the material world, he wrongly assumes that the affairs of the Hereafter are like the affairs of this world, and this is so wrong! This is sheer ignorance! This ignorance has stalled the whole of humanity, and the Noble Qur'an warns: "*...that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you.*" Those nonsensical thoughts of yours are shattered and have disappeared into the darkness.

The Commander of the Faithful, Imām 'Ali, in sermon 107 of *Nahj al-balāghah*, after talking about Divine Unity, the creation of the angels, and the rebellion of people in response to the invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him), describes those people's desire for bounties of the material world and says:

> When a person loves a thing, it blinds him and sickens his heart; then he sees but with a diseased eye. He would not quit what he is doing out of God's fear, nor by the warning of those who warn him, or the advice of those who advise him, while he sees what happens to those who were ignorant and were immersed in negligence; how death descended upon them even as they did not believe it would. The affliction they thought they were immune from befell them, and they were taken out of this world and entered the Hereafter [witnessing] all that which they had been promised. The agony of death and hardships and torment after that cannot be described.

In such a state two things appear to man simultaneously. One is the throes of death. The second is the remorse and grief over losing the opportunities he had in this world to prepare provisions for the Hereafter. This pain is so excruciating that man's limbs lose strength and his complexion changes. Then gradually death increases its pressure over him to the extent that he loses the faculty of speech, while he is still among his kin and sees them and hears them. His intellect and senses are still intact. He then reflects on how he wasted his life and preoccupied himself. He recalls the wealth he collected when he had blinded himself in seeking it, and collected whatever he could from legitimate and/or doubtful sources. The

consequences of the manner in which he collected his wealth haunt him now that he is about to say farewell to his wealth. He realizes that he leaves this wealth for his survivors to enjoy. Therefore, all the joy of this wealth is left for them, and its burden upon his shoulders. He is as attached to his wealth as if he is chained to it, and cannot free himself from this burden. In such a state a man is overwhelmed with regret for wasting his life in the accumulation of wealth. He becomes careless about and detached from that which he loved all his life, wishing someone else and not he could have taken that wealth.

Gradually the signs of death become increasingly visible and take over a man's body, and he begins to lose his hearing as he had lost his power of speech. He is in the presence of his kin, yet neither his tongue nor his ear can function. He looks around and sees their movement of tongue but cannot hear them or understand them. Then death increases its sway over him, and his sight is taken, until finally the spirit departs his body. He then becomes a carcass among his kin. They are afraid of his state and abandon him. He can no longer comfort them or respond to their lamentation. Then they carry him to his grave and bury him and return to carry on with their own lives. This will be the case with every single creature until the worldly life approaches its ordained end and God's command is carried on, when the last creature will join the first, and the end of time will approach by God's command, when He will cleave the moon and the sun and the skies.

In all his sermons the Commander of the Faithful focuses on the three major poles of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), death and Return to God (*Ma'ād*), and piety and fear of God (*taqwā*): "O People! Verily this world is a metaphoric and transient abode while the Hereafter is a real and permanent abode. So, take from this transient abode all you can to your permanent resting place."[128]

One has no options in this journey towards the Hereafter. Therefore, one must take provisions to one's permanent home.

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[128] 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al- balāghah*, Sermon 201.

This is only possible in this world, for this world is the realm of potentialities and opportunities, whereas in the Hereafter it is not possible.

May you earn the Hereafter by being a righteous man of faith and a pious and God-fearing person and enjoy them in total bliss in the Hereafter.

In many other sermons, the Commander of the Faithful (Imām ʻAli) elaborates on these themes:

> ...Do not reveal that which you have veiled [from Satan] before God, Who is aware of your secrets. Take away from this world your hearts before they take your bodies from it, for this world is an abode of trial, and you have been created for the Hereafter. When a man dies, people ask what [property] he left behind while the angels ask what [good deeds] he sent forward. Vow unto your fathers! Send forward something to the Hereafter, for it will be a trust with God for you, and do not leave everything behind, for that would be a burden on you.[129]

There is a narration from Imām Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), that says:

> The Commander of the Faithful had an excruciating pain in his eyes so painful that he screamed. The Holy Prophet went to visit him and told him: "*are you complaining out of impatience and fear or does the pain makes you scream like this*?" ʻAli answered: "O Messenger of God! I have never experienced pain with this severity."
>
> The Prophet of Allah said: "O ʻAli! The Angel of Death captures the soul of the infidel with a melting metal skewer. It is so painful that the infidel screams as loud as though all of hell is screaming."
>
> The Commander of the Faithful then sat up and requested the Prophet to repeat his statement, and upon hearing it, he said: "This saying made me forget about my pain."

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[129] Ibid.

> He then asked the Prophet: "Will anyone from among people in your community (*ummah*) die like this?"
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> The Prophet replied: "Yes, three groups! An unjust and tyrannical ruler, one who steals the property and possessions of an orphan, and finally, a witness who gives false testimony."[130]

[It is reported that] Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) visited a sick person who was no longer able to speak. His relatives, who had gathered around him, told the Imām that they wished to know the state of a man when he approaches death. The Imām said:

> Death is like a purifying tool. It cleanses the sins of the faithful and purifies him in such a way that he pays for the last sin he committed with the last pain he experiences before dying. Conversely, death takes away from the infidel all good deeds he did in this world in such a way that his last joy is the reward of the last good deed he did in the world.
>
> Your dying friend, however, belongs to the first category and has been cleansed and purified from all his sins. He indeed deserves to be the companion of the Prophet's household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) in the everlasting Hereafter.[131]

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[130] *Furu' al-kāfi'*, volume one, chapter on death, "*al-Jan'iz*," section on al-Nawādir, p. 70.

[131] *Ma'ānī al-Akhbar*, p. 289, chapter on the meaning of death ("*M'anī al-mawt*)."

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Eighth Discourse

Salvation: Freedom in Faith and Servitude in Obedience [to God]

The All-Wise Allah said in His Noble Qur'an:

> *What, do they look for the angels to come to them, nothing less, or that thy Lord should come, or that one of thy Lord's signs should come? On the day that one of thy Lord's signs comes it shall not profit a soul to believe that never believed before, or earned some good in his belief.*
>
> *Say: "Watch and wait; We too are waiting."*[132]

Among all beings, whether material or detached, only man possesses contradictory instincts and qualities as well as free will and intellect. As a result of this quality, he is responsible before God to fulfill certain obligations.[133] Although angels possess knowledge and power, they are all assigned to certain tasks and cannot transgress against them. They can neither improve nor perfect themselves. All other beings are also subject to this rule. But human beings possesses aptitude, free will, and the ability to choose and are therefore obliged to fulfill certain duties. Therefore, through proper upbringing and education a man can learn proper manners and attain perfection. Conversely, in the absence of education and training, he will waste this God-given quality and remain in loss forever.

The reality of human existence enables man to choose either to move towards salvation and felicity or towards stagnation in the ruins of wretchedness. According to this rule, the heaven

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[132] Qur'an 6: 158.

[133] The *jinn* community also possess free will and the possibility of neglecting their obligations, but their being is weaker than that of human beings, and in reality they obey human beings.

and hell that God created are for the human being who has free will and uses his capacity to reach perfection; or spoils this capacity with his choices, thereby drowning in the odorous swamp of illusions and passion and lusts. Similarly, as long as there is free will, the path of repentance is open, and man's faith will be effective and his good deeds accepted. But as soon as this gate of free will is closed, all of these possibilities cease to exist. During his lifetime man is free in his faith and actions to actualize all his potentialities. However, in the last hours of his life, when he is plunged into the throes of death, when the veil is removed before his eyes and the truth of the Hereafter is revealed to him, repentance and returning to God will not be accepted, and his faith will not be of any efficacy for him.

In the beginning of this noble verse God is actually asking [us] why people do not believe and do not do righteous deeds even though they possess choice and free will.

Are they waiting for the angels to descend from heaven, or for God to come to them, or for signs of God's wrath and anger to be revealed to them so that they can then believe?! On such a day when signs of God's wrath and punishment appear from the invisible realm, believing in God, for those who did not believe before or did not do any righteous deeds in the world, will not be fruitful, for their faith will be superficial and acquired out of fear and in response to disaster. "*Say to them* [*O Muhammad*]: *'Keep waiting, indeed We are waiting.'*"[134] In other words, God is telling the Prophet to warn those people who asked for proof and evidence to believe the command of the invisible world. "*We will wait as well,*" to prove to you that [your] faith then will not be fruitful for you.

At the end of chapter 40 [of the Qur'an], God describes the stories of the earlier nations and their condition and how they rejected the invitation of the prophets. They argued, "Unless we see everything with our own eyes we will not believe or have faith in it. Our knowledge does not allow us to believe in something we have not seen"! They never listened to their

[134] Qur'an 6: 158.

prophets who presented proof and reason and asked them to weigh their invitation by their God-given consciousness, [primordial] nature, and intellect. They did not listen until they were afflicted with God's wrath and torment.

Those nations put their prophets through such hardships, frustration, and tortures and were never willing to contemplate (*tafakkur*), reflect (*ta'mmul*) or intellect (*ta'aqqul*), and surrender to God's command. As a result, their prophets prayed, and God punished them with different punishments. Among all those nations only the community of our Prophet was saved from punishments because of his holy being: *"But God would never chastise them, with thee among them; God would never chastise them as they begged forgiveness."*[135]

Alas, prophets were always in a struggle with their own people. They invited the people to the Truth (*Ḥaqq*) and the unseen world, while the people relied on their wealth, power, false knowledge, and pride and refused to surrender to the Truth.

> *So, when their Messengers brought them the clear signs, they rejoiced in what knowledge they had, and were encompassed by that they mocked at—Then, when they saw Our might, they said, "We believe in God alone, and we disbelieve in that we were associating with Him."—But their belief when they saw Our might did not profit them—the wont of God, as in the past, touching His servants; then the unbelievers shall be lost."*[136]

God says that when they found themselves afflicted with punishment, only then would they say that they believe in God, deny polytheism, and reject the existence of any partner to God, whereas before that, and when the prophets warned them, they did not want to listen to them, and as the Qur'an says: "*...they rejoiced in what knowledge they had...*"

They claimed to possess knowledge and experience. Their pride blinded them in such a way that they could not imagine

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[135] Qur'an 8: 33.

[136] Qur'an 40: 83–85.

anything beyond their limited vision, and their arrogance did not allow them to understand higher knowledge, which is the knowledge of the prophets. These miserable people did not realize that compared to the knowledge of the prophets who acquired knowledge by presence [before God] (*ḥuḍūrī*) and through witnessing and vision (*shuhūd*), their knowledge is like a drop in the ocean. They did not want to accept that they must surrender to the Truth and recognize the [superiority of] the knowledge of the prophets and step into the path of servitude (*'ubūdīyah*).

The knowledge people claimed to possess was acquired through intellectual faculty and mental activity, and therefore was very shallow, whereas the knowledge of the prophets came from the hidden world of divine mysteries. Obviously, knowledge that is detached from this world and belongs to the world of [divine] mysteries is far superior to all other types of knowledge.

A human being should be humble (*khāḍi'*) and meek (*khāshi'*) before prophets. He should not seek or question the rationale and philosophy of every verse of the glorious Qur'an and accept it only if he understands it and reject it if he does not. This is wrong. If one claims to accept the Word of God only if one can understand its philosophy, one has not accepted the Word of God and His Prophet, but one's own understanding of it. Such a person has not tapped into the Prophet's mysteries, nor has he understood the essence of the Prophet or smelled the perfume of his esoteric knowledge (*'ulūm-i bāṭinīyah*). In contrast, he who considers the Prophet a man of God whose heart is connected to the divine realm will believe that everything he says is the truth and accept that, whether he understands the rationales of those sayings or not. Such a person will advance [on the path] and receive inspiration from the inner reality (*bāṭin*) of the Prophet. It is thus that we say the commands of religion are based on servitude (*ta'abbud*). Even if one knows the rationale and philosophy of those commands, it is still better for him to accept them out of servitude than out of intellectual conviction.

Generally speaking, the teachings of all prophets are based on knowledge emanating from the truth and the inner realities of the unseen world (*'ālam al-ghayb*). They invite people to contemplate and act upon those realities. The objective of these teachings is to help man to free himself from his lower self and join his divine Self. Human beings are different from one another, have different motivations, interests, and tastes. To expect a rationale and a philosophy for every single question every individual human being may have [about commands of religion] is simply impossible. In short, all people who measure God's commands through the scale of their own knowledge and wisdom are burned with the fire of their false ideas in this very world of pride and arrogance. Those who recognize the luminosity and the truth of the teachings and commands of the prophets and surrender, they perceive the truth and discover all mysteries of God's commands by the grace of the Creator of the world.

In the introduction of his celebrated book *Asfār* [*Arba'ah*], Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzi) mentions:

> Indeed I seek profuse forgiveness from God, for having wasted a portion of my life studying the opinions of philosophers and the polemicists from among the theologians and intricacies of their discussions, learning their clever tactics of speech and their sophistry in argumentation, at last with the light of faith (*nūr al-īmān*) and the grace of God, the Munificent, it became clear to me that their syllogisms were sterile and their path not straight. Thereafter, I surrendered my affairs to Him and His Messenger, the Warner and the Warned, believed earnestly in all that had reached us from him, accepting it without making any attempt to find some rational justification or scholarly interpretation for it. Rather, I followed His Prophet's guidance, refrained from what was forbidden, and submitted to his injunctions—as God, Most High, has said, "*...receive what the prophet gives you and prohibit what he*

prohibits you from,"[137] until God opened my heart to what He willed, and by the grace of following His Prophet I was delivered and saved.[138]

'Allāmah [Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn] Ṭabāṭaba'ī wrote a commentary on the following verse: *"Said He, 'What prevented thee to bow thyself, when I commanded thee?' Said he, 'I am better than he; Thou createdst me of fire, and him Thou createdst of clay.'"*[139]

He observed,

> In short, He to whom belongs praise and from whom everything begins and to whom everything shall return; when He creates something and by His grace ordains superiority for that thing over other things, that creation will truly have superiority (*faḍl*) and honor (*sharaf*) over other things in its existentiation. Similarly, when He creates something secondarily and ordains that to be humble from the beginning, that creation finds less perfect existentiation, and its perfection will depend on the superior creature. For it is assumed that God's command either engenders the truth (*takwīn al-Ḥaqq*) or *results* in the creation of the engendered truth (*takwīn*). In either case His saying is the Truth and is obligatory to be followed simply because it is His command, not because it is expedient or has other benefits. Otherwise, the Lordship of God (*rubūbīyatihi*) and His authority (*mawlawīyatihī*) become meaningless, and the reign of His commands and their effects become subject to expediencies and factors that are themselves parts of the qualities of engendered things. Therefore, His command will be created like other existent things without any difference from them whatsoever.[140]

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[137] Qur'an 59: 7.

[138] *Asfār al-arba'ah* the Lithograph edition, volume 1, p. 4; and the lead print version, volume 1, page 11.

[139] Qur'an 7: 12.

[140] Ṭabāṭbā'ī, *al-Mizān*, volume 8, p. 24.

In short, all peoples of the past ridiculed their prophets and rejected them, for they relied on their false knowledge until "*those punishments that they were mocking captured them.*"[141] One wonders how such knowledge could protect them from [God's] punishment as it did not help the people of Hūd eliminate the wind that destroyed them! "*He compelled against them seven nights and eight days, uninterruptedly, and thou mightest see the people laid prostrate in it as if they were the stumps of fallen-down palm trees. Now dost thou see any remnant of them?*"[142]

Korah (Qārūn) was a member of the clan of Moses. God had given him such enormous bounty and wealth that strong men were incapable of carrying the keys to his treasures. But he became an oppressor and became unjust to his people. No matter how much people warned him to change [his behavior], it had no effect on him, and "*He said, 'What I have been given is only because of a knowledge that is in me.'*"[143] He was not aware that God does not care about this knowledge and power and punishes the arrogant and oppressor and destroys them, as the Qur'an says: "*What, did he not know that God had destroyed before him generations of men stronger than he in might, and more numerous in multitude? And yet the sinners shall not be questioned concerning their sins.*"[144]

He was not aware that people who were nobler, wealthier and more powerful than he were destroyed. They were not even asked about their crimes and sins so that they could [at least] make excuses and ask for forgiveness. He was so preoccupied in accumulating wealth that he became a victim of the people's jealousy, and suddenly God's punishment descended upon him. The earth swallowed him, and he was buried in the ground with all his palaces, wealth, and possessions. On such a day no knowledge, power, or friend could help him and take him out

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[141] Qur'an 40: 83.
[142] Qur'an 69: 7–8.
[143] Qur'an 28: 78.
[144] Qur'an 28: 78.

of the ground. "*So We made the earth to swallow him and his dwelling and there Was no host to help him, apart from God, and he was helpless.*"[145]

Similarly, Pharaoh followed Moses and his companions and thought that he would pass through the [miraculous] parting of the water [Nile]. But the water was ordered to drown him and his army.

The Glorious Qur'an says: "*When they see our punishment they say: 'we believed in the One God. We do not believe in what made us the polytheists,' their faith after they see our punishment does not benefit them*"[146] because they do not have any other choice but to believe. This [kind of] faith does not result in believing in God and getting close to Him, nor does it lead to harmony in man's existence or allow him to enter into utopia. Inevitably, God's punishment descends and destroys him. "*Allah's tradition has passed among his servants and the disbelievers will lose.*"[147]

The last moments of life are the moments of actualization when all potentialities and possibilities end and a human being witnesses the results of his deeds. That moment is when all hidden sins and crimes he committed will be manifested and shown to him and brought before his eyes like dark and dreadful valleys. Angels in charge of punishment will be ready to capture his soul in the harshest manner. In such a moment the sinful human being, who thought he possessed free will in the world, will find himself helpless before God's infinite power, His wrath, and the theophany of His majesty. It is only then that he will become a believer and will utter, "*I believe in the God that does not have any partner and equal*"; "*and in His hand is the Kingdom and He is Powerful over everything.*" Hence God's saying in the Qur'an regarding the killing of Pharaoh: "*...when the drowning overtook him, he said, 'I believe that*

[145] Qur'an 28: 81.
[146] Qur'an 40: 84–85.
[147] Ibid.

there is no god but He in whom the Children of Israel believe; I am of those that surrender.'"[148]

In such a moment Pharaoh surrendered to God [a Muslim] and became a believer. However, the Archangel Gabriel took some sludge from the bottom of the sea, put it on his mouth, and said: *"Now? And before thou didst rebel, being of those that did corruption—So today We shall deliver thee with thy body, that thou mayest be a sign to those after thee. Surely many men are heedless of Our signs."*[149]

In another verse about the quality of capturing the spirit of unjust people, God says:

> *And those the angels take, while still they are wronging themselves—the angels will say, "In what circumstances were you?" They will say, "We were abased in the earth." The angels will say, "But was not God's earth wide, so that you might have emigrated in it?" Such men, their refuge shall be Gehenna—an evil homecoming!"*[150]

To justify their behavior, they may say, "We were oppressed and dominated by the wrath of the oppressors, could not stop violating other people's rights, and were not able to go after faith and knowledge of the truth." The angels will respond: "Was not God's earth vast enough so that you could migrate and free yourself from the tyranny of the oppressors, worship God, and search for divine knowledge?" Obviously, before the angels' reasoning they could not defend themselves and were punished severely.

Of course, that group of the oppressed and downtrodden people who do not find a way to free themselves are exempt from punishment, and their excuse will be accepted. There is always hope that they will be forgiven by God, for indeed God is the Hider [of faults] and Merciful: *"Except the men, women, and children who, being abased, can devise nothing and are not*

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[148] Qur'an 10: 90.
[149] Qur'an 10: 91–92.
[150] Qur'an 4: 97.

guided to a way:—haply them God will yet pardon, for God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving."[151]

The Qur'an defines those oppressed people who lack power of perception (*idrāk*), those who cannot or do not know how to free themselves from the domination of forces in their environment, or those who do not have enough wisdom and discernment to differentiate between the truth and falsehood as downtrodden and oppressed. Since they do not realize the falsehood of their manner, they do not try to correct it. These people are defined as downtrodden in the Qur'an's terminology. There is hope that God will forgive them if they have not committed oppression or have not committed injustice towards others. These are the people who are not able to investigate independently the principles and teachings of religion, nor do they have the opportunity to associate with divinely inspired scholars to learn from them and be guided to the straight path. However, those for whom all these opportunities are available and possible and who have had the discernment to attain true knowledge or follow a spiritual teacher but do not do so out of arrogance, negligence, and lust, and those who were misguided and lost, are not considered oppressed. These are among the oppressors who will be punished for their false beliefs, vulgar qualities, and unjust and obscene behavior, as the following verse describes:

> *Whoso emigrates in the way of God will find in the earth many refuges and plenty; whoso goes forth from his house an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage shall have fallen on God; surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.*[152]

Indeed he who migrates will find a place to practice his faith and attain salvation, and if he cannot find such a place his reward will be with God.

This argument and reasoning that one cannot migrate from [the country] of his birth because of attachment to family and

[151] Qur'an 4: 98–99.
[152] Qur'an 4: 100.

relatives is not a valid argument. Such attachments do not relieve man of the responsibilities he has towards God and His commands. A conscious man finds his utmost perfection in spiritual advancement and in attaining the exalted station of a true human being and must set his resolve to reach such a station. If he so wills, God will help him and save him from bewilderment and perplexity. The vigilant human being sees his prosperity in spiritual perfection (*kamāl-i ruhī*) and in reaching the superb station of humanity. He should migrate to the right place with a strong will and true determination. If he has such an intention and determination, God will assist him and free him from bewilderment (*taḥayyur*). Even if he does not reach the desired goals, the fact that he tried and set foot on the path of journeying towards God and longing for union with Him suffices for him.

The way an infidel's spirit is captured depends on the degree of his arrogance and rebellion, and the details of this have been discussed in numerous narrations. Conversely, a believer who has traversed the path of servanthood to God and struggled to spread the truth, God's Oneness, and His love for God, will leave this world of pride with extreme ease. It has been narrated by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq on the authority of 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn Zayn al-'Ābidīn that God, Majestic and Glorious is He, said:

> One of the moments that I hesitate about is the moment of capturing the soul of a person of faith; if he detests death, I detest touching him. Therefore, when the ordained time of his death comes and cannot be delayed, I send two branches of flowers from heaven. One of them is called al-Muskhīyah and the other is named al-Munsīyah; the first detaches him from his wealth, and the second makes him forget the affairs of the material world.[153]

[153] Ṭūsī, *Āmālī*, volume 2, p. 29, and *Biḥār al-anwār*, volume 6, p. 125. There are other narrations with this content that the late Allāmah Ṭihrānī has mentioned in the second volume of *Eschatology*, p. 32 and afterwards.

Intoxicated by the perfume of these flowers and the beauty of God's sacred Precinct, such a man's soul is emptied of everything else but the love of God. All he wishes to do is to sacrifice himself for the Beloved.

If the wind brings me a scent from you
I surrender my life to the wind willingly.[154]

This and other similar narrations demonstrate the subtle kindness (*luṭf*) and mercy (*raḥmah*) of God towards the man of faith. God's special attention to the condition of the man of faith at the time of death is reminiscent of the care of a lover who is concerned about the beloved and does not want to see him saddened or harmed.

The man of faith who has entered the circle of [God's] love, has built a special and intimate relationship with God, and has yearned for meeting God all his life becomes so dear to Him that God loves him and treats him with the most subtle mysteries of love, uttering then, *"I sit with him who sat with me, I remember him who remembered me, I forgive him who sought my forgiveness, I listen to him who obeyed Me."*[155] In this amorous treatment, God touches the man of faith with those two delicate plants that symbolize breezes of attraction of the divine Beauty and Majesty, and has him enter into the eternal realms of mercy and intimate friendship: *"Blessed be the Name of thy Lord, the Lord of Majesty and Bounty (Dhu 'l-Jalāl wa 'l-Ikrām)."*[156] At that moment a caller from the Divine Throne addresses the dying man in such a way that he and everybody around him can hear, uttering the Qur'anic verse,

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[154] Ḥāfiẓ, *Divān.*

[155] Ḥājj Mirzā Aqa Javad Malekī Tabrīzī, *Asrar al-ṣalat*, lead print, p. 19. Born in Tabrīz in 1274/1858, he was one of the most recognized Gnostics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Iran. He received his education in Najaf and returned to Tabrīz in 1321 and started teaching there. A few years later he went to Qom, settled there, and started teaching. His courses on Ethics were particularly important. He died in 1343/1925.

[156] Qur'an 55: 78. Mullā Ṣadrā emphasizes that here the meaning of *ikrām* is the station of majesty.

> *O soul who believes in the Prophet and his successor and the Imāms after him, return to your God contented and with satisfactory sanctity; with reward, enter my service with the Prophet and his family, and enter my heaven eternally with absolution.*

Indeed, in heaven there is Absolute Light, Absolute Freedom, and Absolute Comfort, but the comfort of this world is mixed with discomforts; therefore the man of faith does not desire to return to the material world.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Ninth Discourse:

Beware! Friends of God Do Not Have Fear and Grief in the Throes of Death

The All-Wise Allah says in the Noble Qur'an: *Surely God's friends—no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow—Those who believe, and are Godfearing; for them is good tidings in the present life and in the world to come. There is no changing the words of God; that is the mighty triumph.*[157]

Be aware that there is no fear or grief for the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allāh*). They are the ones who believe in God and have reached the station of piety and fear of God (*taqwā*). There is promise for them in the material life and in the Hereafter, and there is no change in the words of Allah; and this is the grand victory. The term *awliyā'* is the plural form of *walī. Walī* describes a person who possesses free will and total choice, and by virtue of that quality has full guardianship of and responsibility for someone else who has entrusted all his affairs to him. This means that when someone is under the guardianship and protection (*wilāyat*) of a *walī*, he has entrusted all his affairs and his will to him and is under the guardianship and protection of that *walī.*

The Holy Essence of God is also called *Walī.* For example [the Qur'an says]: *"God is the Protecting Friend of the believers; He brings them forth from the shadows into the light."*[158]

Therefore, God is the protector (*Walī*) of those who entrust their affairs to Him. In addition, those who surrender themselves to God's will and recognize that all their affairs are in His hands are also called *walī.* The Friends of God (*awliyā' Allah*) are those people who have transcended their independent existence

[157] Qur'an 10: 62–64.
[158] Qur'an 2: 257.

and have entrusted all their being, intention, and will to the Holy Essence of the Ever-Living God, and have recognized His dominance over all their affairs and intentions.

All created beings are under the engendering will (*wilāyah al-takwīnī*) and command of God. Even a tiny particle is not exempt from this universal rule. But here our concern is over the legislative guardianship (*wilāyat-e tashrī'ī*): that is to say, realization through perceptive faculties (*ḥiss*) and consciousness (*wijdān*) of the fact that that no one has the authority or the right of *wilāyah* except the Eternal Essence of the Self-Existing One. Whoever perceives this universal rule and considers his existence and the existence of all other beings under God's dominance and His will, and entrusts his existence to God's Will consciously (*wijdānan*), will be called a Friend of God (*walī Allah*).

The secret of reaching this station is that through avoidance of sins and obedience to God, some pious people attain perfection and excellence of moral character and find proximity to God. Since the love of God that takes over their hearts and the fire of desire to reach the station of honor (*'izzat*) and closeness to Him (*qurb*) fills all their being, it burns up all lowly and negative qualities and faulty character traits until they settle on the threshold of love.

It is obvious that one of the effects of this love is the appearance of the qualities and virtues (*akhlāq*) of the Beloved in the lover. The more this love and longing increase, the more intense becomes the reflection of divine Qualities in the lover and the more he becomes adorned with God-like attributes, until his soul becomes purified of all impurities and I-ness (*anānīyah*) in such a way that he cannot even have any evil intention left in his essence (*dhat*); neither will he be able to have any memory of evil, because the core of his soul has been cleansed and purified.

Similarly, if the traveler goes beyond this station, with divine providence and succor he will reach the station of God's Names (*asmā'*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*), and will perceive the universal Names and general Qualities in all of existence. After

this station, if divine providence guides him, he will sacrifice his total existence before God's Splendor, Power, Beauty, and Majesty, and as a result will traverse the station of trust (*tawakkul*) in God where he entrusts (*tafwīd*) his affairs to God and reaches the station of contentment (*riḍā*) and submission (*taslīm*).

At such a station not the man but God has full control of and authority over all his affairs. Such a traveler no longer claims free will and choice, for the Holy Essence of God has taken over his affairs and existence and [it is then that] he is called a Friend of God (*walī Allah*). These are the people who have transcended the highest hierarchical orders of the faculties of knowledge and theoretical intellect (*al-'aql al-naẓarī*) or the material or hylic intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlani*), and the habitual intellect (*al-'aql bi'l malakah*), the actualized intellect (*al-'aql bilf'il*), and finally the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). They have surpassed the first three planes of intellect and have reached the last one; thus their knowledge is gained from the Holy Essence of the Unique One through the emanation of the active intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*). In other words, they have transcended the different planes of intellect such as the active intellect, and like the first intellect (*al-'aql al-awwal*), they receive knowledge directly from the Essence of the Truth. Or we can say, they have traversed the planes of the faculty of knowledge and active intellect, and having traversed through three abodes of manifestation (*tajliyah*), self-purification (*takhliyah*), and adornment with God-like qualities (*taḥliyah*), they have reached the station of annihilation (*fanā'*) in God.

According to the holy verses of the Qur'an, Satan does not have access to the Friends of God,[159] for they have surrendered their free will and choice, and God has the authority over their will; therefore the domination of Satan over God's will and choice is impossible and meaningless. Satan hopes to deceive those who are susceptible to forgetfulness and negligence. A

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[159] We shall discuss the characteristics and virtues of the Friends of God in the coming discourses.

person who has surrendered his whole existence and his I-ness (*anānīyah*) and his will to God is totally in God's hands. He sees with God's eye and hears with God's ear, and as the Qur'an says, *"[he] will not unless God wills."*[160] In the soul and being of such a person nothing of the material world is left that Satan could take over. God has said in a divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsi*):[161]

> My servant draws near to Me by nothing dearer to Me than that which I have established as a duty for him. And My servant does not cease to approach Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. And if he asks Me [for something], I give it to him.[162]

Khwajah Naṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī, in the 19th chapter of volume 9 of his commentary on [Avicenna's] *Allusions and Directives* (*Sharh-i Ishārāt* [*wa tanbihāt*]) has said:

> When a Gnostic (*'ārif*) detaches himself from his *self* (*nafs*) and reaches the Truth (*Ḥaqq*), he sees in God's Power all other powers that are extended to contingent beings. He sees God's Knowledge encompassing all other knowledge in such a way that no existent thing can hide from it. He sees God's Will encompassing all wills and all contingent beings subject to it. Rather, all beings and their perfections emanate from Him. [At such a station] God becomes the eye with which he sees, the ear with which he hears, the power with which he acts, and the knowledge with which he knows, and his being becomes God-like. Indeed, the Gnostic becomes adorned with God-like qualities and attributes.[163]

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[160] part of the verse 30, chapter 76. See also Qur'an 81: 29.
[161] See *Kalamat 'lLah*, pp. 68 and 519.
[162] This *ḥadīth* is quoted in many Shī'ite and Sunni sources. See Hajj Mirzā Javād Malekī Tabrīzī, *Laqā' Allah*, lithograph edition, Tabrīz, 1337/1919, p. 29.
[163] Naṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Sharh-i ishārāt*, vol. IV, pp 97–98, Cairo edition, n.d.

Also in chapter 21 of *Ishārāt* [*wa tanbihāt*] Ibn Sīna says:

> The Gnostic (*'ārif*) is [always] blissful, exultant, and cheerful. He respects and holds in high regard the humble and the noble man alike. His soul expands in happiness by [association with] a simple-minded and inarticulate person as it does by [the companionship of] an accomplished and sophisticated soul. And how could he not be blissful, while his happiness emanates from God [the Absolute] Truth and in everything he sees the Truth? How could he discriminate between things and treat them differently while they all enjoy God's mercy (*ahl al-raḥmah*) and only [temporarily] are engaged in error (*bāṭil*) in this world?

Ṭūsī comments on the above statement in the following terms:

> These two attributes of a Gnostic, that is to say, his kindness towards all existent things and his regarding them as equal, have the same effect on the state of his soul and his attributes (*khulq*). This is called contentment (*riḍā*). This is an attribute that does not allow its possessor to reject anything, or fear being attacked by anything, or become sad for losing anything. It is to this station that God alluded in the Qur'an: "*...God has promised the believers, men and women, gardens underneath which rivers flow, forever therein to dwell, and goodly dwelling-places in the Gardens of Eden (Riḍwān); and greater, God's good pleasure; that is the mighty triumph. From this station is derived the name of the angel Riḍwān, who protects the Treasure house of Heaven.*"[164]

Indeed, the Friends of God have severed their tie to Satan, and have attained union with God; hence Satan does not have the power to penetrate into their mental faculties, as the Qur'an says: "*...he [Satan] has no authority over those who believe and trust in their Lord; his authority is over those who take him for their friend and ascribe associates to God.*[165]

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[164] Qur'an 9: 72.

[165] Qur'an 16: 99–100.

After deceiving Adam, who was cast away by Allah, Satan said to God: "*Now, by Thy glory, I shall pervert them all together, excepting those Thy servants among them that are sincere.*"[166]

The station of sincerity (*khulūṣ*) is a necessary component of the station of sanctity (*wilāyah*); therefore the sincere ones who are purified by God (*mukhlaṣīn*), are Friends of God. Amongst their qualities is that they do not experience the throes of death, the horror-world of the grave, the intermediate world (*barzakh*), and the different stations of the Resurrection, for they experienced these stations in this world; otherwise they would not have reached the station of sanctity (*wilāyah*). Interrogations and punishments in the Hereafter are the results of committing sins and following the carnal soul (*nafs al-ammārah*), and it is impossible for the Friends of God, who have reached the station of purity (*ṭahārah*), to commit sins or evil actions. They have opted to cleanse their souls in this world; they have scrutinized the account of their deeds and have transcended the abodes of the archetypal world (*'ālam-i mithāl*), the carnal soul (*nafs*), and the great Resurrection of the soul. They have joined the angelic beings, the immaculate souls of the prophets and Imāms, and have reached the great treasure house of glory, knowledge, power, and [eternal] life. They have reached a station of consciousness (*wijdān*) and realization (*taḥaqquq*) where fear and sorrow cannot penetrate. "*Be aware that the friends of God never have distress and do not grieve.*"[167]

Fear and anxiety are caused by concerns over the possibility of losing the beloved in the future; grief and sorrow are caused by the regret of having lost the beloved in the past. Ordinary human beings are constantly in fear or grief because their lives are based on expediencies and dreams, and they act in consideration of their material interests and their attachment to contingencies. This is in such a way that even while they are preoccupied with other things and forget fear and sorrow temporarily, they are hidden in the depths of their minds. As

[166] Qur'an 38: 82–83.
[167] Qur'an 10: 62.

soon as they become free from hindrances, fear and sorrow resurface and show themselves. Hence ordinary human beings try to free themselves from anxiety and fear by turning to worldly pleasures and material satisfaction. But this is not possible, for as soon as the temporary pleasure is gone, the hidden fear and anxiety reappear and disturb them again. The reason for this is that material attachments and pleasures that by nature are transient and perishable plant the same qualities in man's heart and affect it in such a way that his heart falls into constant anxiety and fear of losing his belongings.

In contrast, the Friends of God have freed themselves from these attachments; hence change and transformation of space and time, along with other qualities of materiality, do not affect their minds and souls. Although their physical beings may become afflicted with painful and tragic events, their hearts and souls are free from the love of the material world and settled in His peaceful sanctuary and sacred Precinct.

Friends of God are those who have transcended the abode of the particulars and have reached the realm of the Universal. They have gone beyond the boundaries of the transient world and have reached the realm of Eternity (*abadīyat*). They have renounced [the charms of] this world and [the rewards of] the next world. They have entered the ocean of Majesty and Power of the Truth, and hence their being has become infinite and free from limitations. Taking a few cups of water from the ocean does not change the quality and quantity of the water, but it does affect the limited vessel.

The man who is imprisoned in the confines of the world of nature and the lower plane of the carnal soul is like a pitcher, whereas the Friends of God are like a vast ocean. They do not become afflicted with fear and sorrow. Taking from or adding a pitcher of water to the ocean does not make much difference. This is the meaning of the men of great souls that God, Most High, has described in the Qur'an [when He says], *"that you*

may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice in what has come to you."[168]

The Commander of the Faithful [Imām 'Ali] interpreted this verse and its relation to asceticism in the following terms:

> All of asceticism is between two injunctions of the Qur'an: He who practices asceticism is the one who does not regret the past and does not become cheerful for the future. [Such a person] has indeed understood the two meanings of asceticism and practiced it.[169]

Now, the question is, "Who are these Friends of God?" According to the Qur'an they are the ones who believe in God and act on the basis of their faith until they become God-fearing and pious. In other words, their faith leads them to become more pious and God-fearing, and this in turn results in the strengthening of their faith until they attain the highest station of piety. The process has been described in detail in the Qur'an: "*O believers, shall I direct you to a commerce that shall deliver you from a painful chastisement? You shall believe in God and His Messenger...*"[170] And, "*O believers, believe in God and His Messenger...*"[171]

If one contemplates, one will realize that this level of faith that the Qur'an calls the believers to is a new type of faith and different from ordinary faith in the sense that this faith purifies and cleanses the heart from all kinds of disbelief in the most perfect way and illuminates the heart and conscience with the light of Divine Unity (*Tawḥīd*). Rather than simply calling them "those who had faith and were pious," the Qur'an identifies this group of believers as "*Those who believed and became pious*": "*Those who believe, and are Godfearing—for them is good*

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[168] Qur'an 57: 23.

[169] Commentary on *Nahj al-balāghah*, chapter of Al-Hukm, Mohammad Abdoh Print, Egypt, volume 2, p. 238.

[170] Qur'an 61: 10–11.

[171] Qur'an 4: 136.

tidings in the present life and in the world to come. There is no changing the words of God; that is the mighty triumph."[172]

Thus, for such believers in this world are the good tidings of peace of mind, certitude, tranquility, and the pleasures of enjoying God's bounties and God-given blessings, and the promise of paradise, of meeting with and companionship of the spirits of prophets, Imāms, and angels, of reaching the station of Divine Names and Universal Qualities of God, and finally of meeting Him and annihilation (*fanā'*) in His Holy Essence, and Resurrection in different planes of the station of Divine Unity (*Tawḥīd*).

In the Hereafter the Friends of God will be given the good tidings of eternal paradise, forgiveness, passing peacefully through the Bridge (*ṣirāt*), everlasting blessing, the pure water from the spring of Kowthar, joining with the spirits of prophets, companionship with the pure and precursors, the attainment of the station of Divine Beauty, and the abode of peace.

The good tidings of paradise are exclusive to the Friends of God and do not include the rest of human beings, for such an assurance refers to an event whose occurrence is certain and inevitable. For only in two situations are the matters pertaining to human life certain and inevitable: one is when a person reaches the station of *wilayāh*, the second when he faces death. Otherwise the human being always struggles to choose between good and evil, felicity and wretchedness, and can choose one or the other. Hence good tidings about contingencies or events that may or may not occur are meaningless, and the fact that one may be steadfast in faith and a true believer becomes irrelevant, as the following verse indicates: "*Indeed, those who said: 'Allah is our God,' then persisted, the angels descend on them [saying] 'do not be afraid, do not be sad' and enunciate to them the paradise that they have been promised.*'"[173]

Those who do not reach the station of sincerity (*khulūṣ*) in the world but are true believers and steadfast in faith, good tidings are given to them at the time of death. Evidence for this

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[172] Qur'an 10: 62–63.
[173] Qur'an 41: 30.

conclusion is given when God says, *"and enunciate to them the paradise that they have been promised."* Since at the moment of death the world is a thing of the past, God reminds them of future bounties that they had been promised in the world.

In contrast, good tidings are given to Friends of God in this world as they have attained the station of *wilāyah* and been freed from fear and sorrow. They are different from others. They are God's special servants who have received the seal of sanctity and have been granted the honorific title of Friend of God (*walī Allah*). This conclusion is elaborated on and reiterated in several verses of the Qur'an where the station of *wilāyah* is called a blessing, a bounty, and a gift (*ni'mat*) from God.

After the Battle of Uḥud[174] the Prophet mobilized Muslim fighters and ordered them to chase the pagans in order to intimidate them. In a location known as Ḥamra' al-Asad about eight miles outside the city of Medina they met a certain Ma'bad Khoz'ā'i. Ma'bad expressed regret for the Muslims' defeat. He left the Prophet and then encountered Abū Sufyān and his companions in Rawha' while they were planning to gather strength to attack the Muslims. Ma'bad warned them of the imminent arrival of a large Muslim army. This news terrified the infidels and prompted them to escape. Abū Sufyān bribed Nu'aym ibn Mas'ūd Ashj'aī, who was one of the hypocrites of Medina, to go to Muslim camp and exaggerate about the strength of his army so that the Muslims would become frightened and retreat. Nu'aym went to the Muslim camp and tried to frighten them and urged them to stop fighting. This did not scare anyone among the Muslims. They turned to him and recited the verse of the Qur'an: *"...their faith became stronger and they said: 'Allah is enough for us and he is the best Trustee.'"*[175]

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[174] The Battle of Uḥud took place in 3/625 between Muslims led by the prophet against the Quraysh tribe led by Abū Sufyān. See, Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, Reprinted, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002, pp. 177–179.
[175] Qur'an 3: 173.

They said to Nu'aym that they welcomed anything that might happen, that everything they had accomplished was given to them by God, and that He is their best Deputy (*Kafīl*) and Trustee (*Wakīl*). Since they trusted and surrendered their will, God took responsibility for their affairs, their faith became stronger, and God bestowed on them His blessing, which is none other than the station of His friendship (*wilāyat*):[176] *"So they returned with blessing and bounty from God, untouched by evil; they followed the good pleasure of God; and God is of bounty abounding."*[177]

In this situation, God helped His Prophet, and he returned to Medina safely with confidence, faith, and dignity (*sharaf*) while their infidel and polytheist enemies were intimidated and scared.[178]

About the signs and characteristics of Friends of God, the Commander of the Faithful [Imām 'Alī], says:

> The Friends of God are those who see the inner reality of the world while the other people look at its outward reality. They are preoccupied with its end whereas the other people are preoccupied with transient things in the world. They kill those things of the world that they fear would have killed them, and they abandon in this world what they think would leave them. They despise the amassing of wealth by the people, and what people consider assets, in their eye are liabilities. They abhor those things that others love while they love things that others hate. They acquire their knowledge from the Qur'an, and through them the Qur'an becomes known. With them the Qur'an is upheld while they are protected by the Qur'an. They do not invest hope in

[176] It should be noted that the blessing of sanctity (*wilāyat*) was given to those who had trust in God (*tawakkul*) in secrecy, and they were the people of spiritual beauty (*iḥsān*) and God-wariness (*taqwā*). See Qur'an 3: 172.
[177] Qur'an 3: 174.
[178] Qur'an 3: 173.

anything other than that which they seek, and do not fear anything other than whom [God] they should fear.[179]

Also in a commentary on the following verse, "*...men whom neither commerce nor trafficking diverts from the remembrance of God...*[180] he maintains:

Indeed, God, Praised is He, has made His remembrance polish of the hearts, so that man can hear after he has ceased to hear, can see after he has failed to see, and can find peace and serenity after rebellion.

In every age when a prophet is not present, there are servants of God on earth through whom God whispers through their wits and speaks through their intellects. With the discernment in their hearts and light [of wisdom] in their eyes, they remember God every day and remind others to remember Him. They praise whoever follows the path of moderation and give him good tidings of salvation. They blame and condemn whoever deviates from the straight path to the right or the left and warn them of their destruction. They are like lamps in the darkness that guide people through doubts and uncertainties. Indeed, they are devoted to the remembrance of God and would not change that with [all the bounties of] the world. No trade or transaction turns their attention away from God. They observe justice and command others to be just. They refrain from the unlawful and command people to refrain from it. It is as though they have completed the journey of life in this world and live in the Hereafter. They see what is beyond as though they know the unseen lives of the people of the intermediate world that is purgatory (*barzakh*) and have lived there, for they know all that befell them there. They remove the veil from these things for the people of the world as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear. Therefore, take heed and examine the account of

[179] 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāghah*, vol. II, p. 237.
[180] Qur'an 24: 37.

your own soul; otherwise, One other than you will scrutinize your account![181]

Indeed, these utterances of the Commander of the Faithful that describe the stations of the Friends of God are truly books of wisdom unto themselves and need to be contemplated. If one analyzes different parts of them, it becomes clear how the Friends of God go to paradise directly and do not have to account for their actions, and why they do not experience the throes of death and trepidation of the grave or the intermediate realm and the Resurrection Day, for they have traversed through all these stations in this world.

The preceding discussion makes it abundantly clear that the Friends of God are those who surrender all their being to God and totally submit their affairs to Him. As a result they attain a station where they are protected from all anxieties and concerns that ordinary people experience at the time of death and are immune from being questioned and from trepidation of the grave and punishment on the Day of Judgment.

The important point that must be borne in mind is that those who obey the Friends of God become one of them and are protected from torment in their graves: "*Whosoever obeys God, and the Messenger—they are with those whom God has blessed, Prophets, just men, martyrs, the righteous; good companions they!—That is the bounty from God; God suffices as One who knows.*"[182]

This and other similar verses are heartwarming for ordinary people who have not experienced the station of *wilāyah.* If they associate with and obey the Friends of God, they can still become their companions on the path and thus experience *wilāyah.*

What is the mystery behind this relationship and companionship? The secret is in the trust and devotion of a traveler to a guide, as he relinquishes his will to him and

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[181] For the full text of this sermon, see *Nahj al-balāghah*, Abdoh print, vol. 1, pp. 446–448.

[182] Qur'an 4: 69–70.

surrenders all his affairs on the path to him. This is the meaning of obedience in such relationships. This is like the trust and obedience of a child to his parents or teachers. Parents and teachers have the right and responsibility of guardianship (*wilāyat*) over their child and student, and the child and student are at the station of trust and obedience.

Those who obey God and His Prophet replace their own will and choice in all mundane and spiritual matters with God's Will and with the guardianship of His Messenger. We already demonstrated and proved that Friends of God are fully immersed in the ocean of Divine Names (*asmā'*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) and that there is no separation or barrier between them and God. Indeed, God possesses their being. Hence for those who obey God, He becomes their Guardian and protecting Friend (*Walī*). Since prophets and the righteous (*ṣaliḥīn*) and sincere servants of God (*ṣādiqīn*) and those who witness are all Friends of God, they will become the guardian and protector (*walī*) of their own companions and fellow travelers as well. Since there is no separation or barrier between God and His friends, when God becomes the *Walī* of an obedient servant, all his friends become God's friends as well. As the angel says, "*We are your friends in the present life and in the world to come...*"[183]

The defining principle behind this conclusion is that God's protection and friendship (*wilāyah*) are a single reality. This reality does not accept duality and cannot be fragmented or divided; hence the *wilāyah* of the Friends of God is the same as God's *wilāyah*. This conclusion is based on the Qur'an, where sometimes *wilāyah* is exclusive to God alone, as the following verses indicate:

> *God is the Protector of the believers...*[184]

and,

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[183] Qur'an 41: 31.
[184] Qur'an 2: 257.

...and God is the Protector of the believers.[185]

...they have, apart from God, no protector and no intercessor...[186]

They have no protector, apart from Him...[187]

and,

Thereover protection belongs only to God the True...[188]

And sometimes He wills to extend that to His friends (*awliyā'*):

Your friend is only God, and His Messenger, and the believers...[189]

The Prophet is nearer to the believers than their selves...[190]

and, *And the believers, the men and the women, are friends one of the other...*[191] As stated before, God friendship is a single reality, and all those who are obedient to God's Friends will be protected from the throes and torment of death and afterwards. This rule applies to the realm of contingencies as well. It is recorded in numerous narrations that the Prophet and the Immaculate Imāms ate the same food as their servants and dressed in the same as they did. Sometimes they even gave priority to them over themselves in food and clothing. The Shī'ites who entrust their affairs to their masters (the prophet and the Imāms) and adorn themselves with the robe of piety and fear of God will be honored with their companionship in all stations, as documented in hundreds of narrations and records.

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[185] Qur'an 3: 68.
[186] Qur'an 6: 51.
[187] Qur'an 18: 26.
[188] Qur'an 18: 44.
[189] Qur'an 5: 55.
[190] Qur'an 33: 6.
[191] Qur'an 9: 71.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Tenth Discourse

The Union of the Believers with the Friends of God and the Union of the Deniers with Satan

God, the All-Wise, has said in His Noble Book:

> *God confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come; and God leads astray the evildoers; and God does what He will. Hast thou not seen those who exchanged the bounty of God with unthankfulness, and caused their people to dwell in the abode of ruin?*[192]

There are many different kinds of people in this world with many different types of characteristics. There are some who are good and some who may be evil. There are people whose outward being (*ẓāhir*) is different from their inner being (*bāṭin*). Some people's inward state dominates their outward life and in some it is quite the opposite. Among some others there is a harmony between their inward and outward states.

The inner state of man may change in consideration of virtuous or evil acts. A good soul can turn evil, and an evil soul may be transformed into a virtuous soul as a result of a man's actions.

Although people of righteous souls and good deeds may commit errors and do evil occasionally, by and large, they believe in God and follow the example of the Prophet and perform beautiful deeds and thus tame and strengthen their inner being.

Similarly, people whose inner being is evil and who are non-believers may do some good deeds on occasion, but generally they are inclined towards evil and heresy. The question is what will be the state of these two categories of people at the time of death? Are their good and evil deeds counted separately? What

[192] Qur'an 14: 27–29.

will be their state and status in the Hereafter? Are good and bad counted together in the Hereafter as well? Do good and evil deeds, luminosity and darkness, felicity and wretchedness, go side-by-side? Is the Hereafter an abode of pure light, joy, and pleasure; or will there be anxiety and sadness for those who are saved? Will the Qur'anic injunctions apply to them, as it is promised?

> *We shall strip away all rancour that is in their breasts; and underneath them rivers flowing; and they will say, "Praise belongs to God, who guided us unto this."*[193]

and,

> *We shall strip away all rancour that is in their breasts; as brothers they shall be upon couches set face to face.*[194]

Or is the Hereafter the abode of absolute darkness and torture and wretchedness for sinners and evil-doers?

Righteous and wicked people live side-by-side in the world and are not separated from one another. Even in relation to a single individual, it is not possible to separate his beautiful deeds from his evil ones. It is only in the course of life that people show their inclinations and true nature and choose to follow the path of righteousness or wretchedness.

As long as a human being is honored by God so as to have a choice in relation to his duties towards Him, the possibilities of inclination towards good and towards evil exist equally. The opportunities to commit good or evil, and the presence of divine inspirations or Satanic thoughts, are all possible. Such possibilities make the human being a unique and exceptional creature. The world is like a house where, on the one hand, good and evil live side-by-side, and illuminated souls intermingle with wretched ones. Since this world is a world of contingencies, people see only one another's outward states, but their inward states remain hidden and unknown to others. On

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193 Qur'an 7: 43.
194 Qur'an 15: 47.

the other hand, at the moment of death the possibility of free will disappears and each person is judged individually and independent of others. His good deeds are separated from his evil deeds, and he enters an abode that is either absolutely good or absolutely evil; either he will enter paradise or hell. Beyond this point, doubt and confusion or the intermingling of good and evil becomes meaningless.

With criteria set by God, one's good deeds go towards the abode of good, and evil ones go to the realm of evil. These realms are where all non-manifest traits are manifested and secrets are revealed. The righteous and the evil people will be together with their own kind. This is just like the catalysis of a water molecule in the presence of two different catalysts, which because of their different natures each affect it differently according to the situation. A person who is genuinely noble and virtuous but wears shaggy and dirty clothing can manifest the beauty of his character only by cleaning up and changing his clothes. By the same token, no matter how many times a person of evil nature and unpleasant character washes himself, his nature will remain the same.

Paradise is the abode of those servants of God who strengthen their inner being through obedience towards God and good deeds, and thus beautify their character. Since the inner being of such a man is good and virtuous, it becomes a center of the emanation of love, affections, chivalry, and justice, and the expression of servanthood towards God. Even if they commit some sins here and there, these do not affect their inner being. Once they repent, those sins will be removed from their book of actions, and they will join the gathering of the good and the virtuous.

Conversely, those whose inner being is corrupted by polytheism (*shirk*) and disbelief (*kufr*), and those who disregard people's rights and commit evil deeds and violate God's sacred Precinct, their inner being and nature will not change. Even if they do good deeds, the efficacy of their deeds does not penetrate into the depths of their souls. As soon as they face a worldly challenge and trial, they will manifest their true nature

and will join the community of evil-doers and the corrupt. As Rūmī says,

> Every particle that exists on the land and in the sky
> is like a magnet that attracts its own kind.[195]
>
> People of the fire attract people of the fire
> and people of the light seek people of the light.[196]

Thus a believer who has beautified his inner being and illuminated it with faith, even if he commits a sin, he will become free of its ramifications by the grace of the divine flash, and his true nature will fly towards its real abode, that is, "*in a sure abode, in the presence of a King Omnipotent.*"[197]

In short, after going through trials and detachment each quality and attribute of man returns to its original abode as it is said, "*Every thing returns to its original essence.*" The essence of paradise is purity and perfection, and the essence of hell is ugliness and impurity. A person of faith who wishes to go to heaven must detach himself from all accidents and impurities of his soul. Otherwise, he will not be able to traverse the distance. Similarly, a disbeliever by necessity has to abandon all the good deeds and virtue that descended on his soul by accident. Otherwise, he will not be allowed to go to hell.

An important principle to bear in mind is that for a believer who is always conscious and in good spirits by virtue of his faith and good deeds, when he commits a sin knowingly or unknowingly, that sin does not penetrate into the depths of his soul. His spirit in fact rejects that sin or evil act. Conversely, when a person whose inner being is impure does a good deed or a virtuous act, his spirit does not absorb such acts and rejects them. Ultimately, his hypocritical nature will reveal itself one way or another.

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195 Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī, *Mathnawī*, Mirza Mahmoodi edition, VI: 619.

196 *Mathnawī*, 2: 106.

197 Qur'an 54: 55.

At the moment of death. God directs every creature to the reality of his soul. He leads those who belong to the angelic realm to that abode. those who belong to the Higher Plenum (*'illiyīn*)[198] to their home. and those who belong to the lower abode (*sijjīn*)[199] to their world.

God removes all the veils of the realm of contingencies and reveals the abode of the Truth. He sends the people of paradise to different planes of heaven appropriate for their stations and the people of the hell to the different planes of hell that they deserve. Thus. God judges man in accordance with divine flashes and His own measure. He places all good in one abode as all evil goes to a different one; accidental good and evil deeds join their types that are good or evil in essence. As the Qur'an says.

> *He shall go before his people on the Day of Resurrection. and will have led them down to the Fire-evil the watering-place to be led down to!*[200]

and.

> *...and the unbelievers will be mustered into Gehenna. that God may distinguish the corrupt from the good. and place the corrupt one upon another. and so heap them up all together. and put them in Gehenna: those are the losers.*[201]

Similarly. God gathers all pure beings and has them enter into paradise together.

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[198] *Sijjīn* is the low world where people of the "left hand" (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*) are sent. in contrast to the "higher realim" (*'illiyīn*). which will be the world of the People of the Right Hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*).

[199] *"Nay. but the record of the righteous is in the higher realm."*

كلا ان كتاب الابرار لفى عليين

"Nay. but the record of the vile is in sijjīn."

كلا ان كتاب الفجار لفى سجين

Qur'an: 83: 7 and 83: 18.

[200] Qur'an 11: 98.

[201] Qur'an 8: 37.

It is narrated in *'Illal al-sharāyi'* that a certain Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Lathi[202] asked Imām Bāqir about the nature (*ṭīnat*) of believers and hypocrites and their deeds. Imām Bāqir replied,

> "As the rays of the sun are separated from it when the sun rises and returns to it when it sets, similarly, every being ultimately returns to its origin and unites with its own kind. Thus, on the Day of Resurrection God takes out all sins and evil deeds of a man of faith and sends them to the hypocrite; and takes out all good deeds of the hypocrite and unites them with the soul of the man of faith. Do you see any injustice in such action?"[203]

> Then the Imām continued,

> "By God! This is the command of God and His ordained justice. Unlike man, His actions are just and cannot be questioned. O Ibrāhīm! You received the truth. Do not have doubt in it. This is the ordained rule of Divine Kingdom."[204]

> Ibrāhīm asked, "O son of the Prophet! What is [exactly] the ordained rule of the Divine Kingdom?"

> Imām Bāqir replied,

> "It is what God and His messengers ordained. Do you remember the story of the Prophet Moses and Khiḍir? When they became companions and traveled together, Khiḍir said to Moses '*Verily! You will not be able to have patience with me! And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not?*'[205]

> "So remember O Ibrāhīm! Reflect how Khiḍir criticized Moses, and when Moses insisted and questioned him, Khiḍir had to inform Moses that whatever he said or did was by

[202] One of the students and disciples of Imām Bāqir and a scholar of *Ḥadīth*.
[203] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *'Illal al-sharāyi'*, Najaf, 1385/1966, pp. 606–610.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Qur'an 18: 65–82.

God's Power and His command. He told him that he could not afford being his companion, for he was not patient about that which he did not know. So, Beware O Ibrāhīm! This is the Qur'an, the Word of God! Whoever rejects one word of it will reject God and become a disbeliever!"[206]

Ibrāhīm said that he recited the Qur'an for 40 years but did not understand this story about Moses and Khiḍir. He wondered how strange it would be for them to take away the good deeds of the Imām's foes and give them to his followers and give their bad deeds to the Imām's enemies, and asked if this issue was ever discussed in the Qur'an, whereupon Imām Bāqir replied, "By God! I just informed you of the truth. God is never unjust to His servants nor does He ever oppress him. There are more than 30 instances in the Qur'an where these issues are discussed."[207]

It has been mentioned in many narrations that since a man of faith cleanses all impurities from his heart, whenever he finds the truth, he accepts it, and wherever he can do a good deed, he will. Thus even if he becomes negligent for a short time and commits a sin, God will punish him in this world, and therefore his sins will be forgiven. Every fever or other hardship that he experiences is expiation (*kaffārah*) that he pays for his sins. What does expiation for sins mean for a man of faith? It means that all visible signs of his sins will be removed from him. Similarly, any pleasure a disbeliever experiences in the world is the reward of his good deeds in the world. Since he does not seek God-pleasure and does not appreciate proximity to Him, he has worldly objectives for any good deed he does. Therefore, God rewards him in accordance with his intention and grants him all kinds of bounties in this world. God does not owe him anything, and therefore he does not receive any reward after death for his good deeds.

The sins of the man of faith are extraneous to his being and separated from his faith and intention. In order to cleanse him

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[206] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *'Illal al-sharāyi'*.
[207] Ibid.

of sins. God afflicts him with trials [in this world] that awaken him. These afflictions become expiation for his sins. Therefore, since a man of faith is committed to and responsible before God and has paid for his sins in the world, when he dies he will be taken to that exalted station he was promised.

There are many narrations according to which even at the moment of death Satan tries to deceive a man and shake his faith by promising him rewards. However, a true man of faith knows him and his deceptions and will not be fooled. As Imām Ṣādiq said,

> When the moment of death of a person arrives, Satan sends one of his agents to command him to disbelief and create doubt in his faith till his soul departs his body. If one is a true believer, Satan will not succeed. So when the moment of your death arrives, utter the *Shahādah* (*Lā ilāha ill'lLah, Muhammadun Rasūl'lLah*) till your soul departs your body.[208]

It is obvious that Satan tries to control a man's mind and seduce him. He tries to create illusions in a man's mind to cause him to give up God's love and his desire to meet Him and attain a high station in heaven. He seduces man with worldly bounties and beauties and tries to detach him and his thoughts from spiritual matters and disengaged realities and beings, and to redirect his attention to illusive attractions of the world. Despite all these efforts, however, a man of faith realizes the illusive nature of Satan's efforts and awaits God's permission and His command to enter into and fly in the firmament of Divine Unity and traverse the abode of Divine Names and Attributes. In such a state and while his soul is contemplating Divine Names and Attributes, it begins to travel to heaven. That is why when a man is on his deathbed, he must be reminded to utter the *Shahādah* (*Lā ilāha ill'lLah, Muhammadun Rasūl'lLah*). There are of

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[208] Muhammed ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr 'Āmili, *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. II, p. 663.

course specific rules and instructions for keeping company with a man on his deathbed.[209]

One must know that Satan is also God's agent and has duties to perform. Like a spark that catalyzes water, he separates the righteous from the wretched and the true faith from the fake so that the pure will ascend towards God, as the Qur'an indicates: *"Like Satan, when he said to man, 'Disbelieve'; then, when he disbelieved, he said, 'Surely I am quit of you. Surely I fear God, the Lord of all Being.'"*[210]

In other words, Satan first seduces man, and when he succeeds in deceiving him, informs him that hell is his abode where other disbelievers reside. But a believer is strong like a mountain, and storms cannot move him. It is narrated that Imām Ṣādiq once said,

> Indeed Satan comes to the bedside of each one of our friends at the time of his death. He enters from the right side and the left side to distract him from being preoccupied with God. However, God does not allow a man of faith to be distracted. That is why God says in the Qur'an,[211] *"God confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come."*[212]

There is a strong symbolic message in the way Satan enters the believer on his deathbed. The right side represent man's faith and the left side his worldly desires. Thus, Satan targets both the material as well as spiritual dimensions of man's being, as the Qur'an says: *"...then I shall come on them from before them and from behind them, from their right hands and their left hands; Thou wilt not find most of them thankful."*[213]

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[209] We will discuss this issue in detail in the coming chapters.
[210] Qur'an 59: 16.
[211] Abū Nasr Muhammad ibn Mas'ūd 'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. II, Qom, n.d., p. 225. On his life and works see Muhammad Lazim Raḥmatī, "Tafsīr-i 'Ayyāshi," in *Danesh Nameh-ye jahān-i Islam*, 1386/2007.
[212] Qur'an 14: 27.
[213] Qur'an 7: 17.

For those who believe in God and perceive God's Unity and in practice resort to *wilāyah*, God will be their Protector, and the Prophet and Imāms their support. A person must always keep his hopes high, and even if he commits a sin, repent and cleanse his inner being from the deeper impact of that sin on his soul.

Aṣbagh ibn Nubātah[214] has narrated the account of an encounter between Ḥārith al-Hamdānī[215] and 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, which contains profound lessons. He said,

> Ḥārith al-Hamdānī and a number of Shī'ites entered the presence of 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib. I accompanied the group. Ḥārith was sick and had pain in his feet and used a cane when he walked. 'Ali had special respect for Ḥārith, and when he saw him in pain he said to him, "O Ḥārith! What has befallen you?"
>
> Ḥārith said, "O Commander of the Faithful! Old age has taken over me and taken away my health. The quarrel among your disciples and followers fighting at your own back door has frustrated me and taken my patience."
>
> 'Ali asked him what they were quarreling about, and Ḥārith replied, "[They quarrel] about you and the three [caliphs] who were before you. Some of them support you but exaggerate a great deal about you. A second group is also your supporter but they are moderate and because of that they are subject to the hostility of the first group. The third

[214] He was one of the trusted disciples of Imān 'Ali and narrated many of his sayings. He was reportedly born in Kufa, but nothing is known about the date of his birth or death He is known as one of the notables of the city of Kufa during the first/seventh century. After Imām 'Ali's assassination, he joined his sons, Imām Ḥasan and Imām Ḥusayn. A treatise is attributed to him titled *On the Martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn*. See Shaykh Abbas Qomi, *Muntahi al-āmāl*, Tehran, 1377/1998, pp. 1278–1279.

[215] Ḥārith ibn 'Abdullah Ḥamdānī was another trusted disciple of Imām 'Ali, and one of the *Tabi'īn*. He was a jurist and a scholar of *Ḥadīth*, known as *'awar* (one-eyed). See Shaykh Abbas Qomi, pp. 280–282. See also Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, edited by Hāshim Ḥusayni Tehrani, Qom, 1357s/1978.

group is in doubt. They are not sure if they should rise and support you or step aside and remain quiet."

'Ali answered. "O Brother! Know that the best of my followers (Shī'atī) are those who are moderate and take the middle path (*al-namaṭ al-awsaṭ*).[216] The other two groups must follow this path. O Ḥārith! You are a man who knows the truth. God's religion is not known by the men who follow that but by the truth. You must know the truth first and then judge men in accordance with the criteria it sets. Once you know the truth you can know men of truth.

"O Ḥārith! Speaking the truth is the best of utterances, and those who uphold the truth struggle on the path of God (*mujāhid*). Let me inform you of the truth.

"Indeed, I am God's servant and the brother of His Messenger and the first man to believe him before Adam was created. In your community too I am the first who believed him. We are the first and the last who truly believed him. I am chosen by God's Messenger and am his legatee and friend and possessor of his sayings and secrets. He gave me the knowledge of the Book and of the past and the future. He gave me a thousand keys that open a thousand doors of mysteries and secrets of all times."[217]

There are many narrations about similar encounters with 'Ali that contain profound spiritual and metaphysical lessons about *wilāyah*. Space does not allow us to repeat them here, and those who are interested in learning more can refer to the sources we mentioned in this and many other discourses.

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[216] Qur'an 2: 143.

[217] The original version of this narration is long, and it is summarized here. This narration is recorded in many primary sources. See for instance, Ṭūsī, *Āmālī*, Abū 'Ali Ḥā'iri, *Muntahī an-maqāl*.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Eleventh Discourse

Distinctions between the World of Nature, the Intermediate World, and the Realm of Resurrection—I

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *Till, when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord, return me; haply I shall do righteousness in that I forsook." Nay, it is but a word he speaks; and there; behind them, is a barrier until the day that they shall be raised up.*[218]

When a man dies and leaves this world, he enters into another domain that is called the intermediate world (*purgatory—barzakh*) and will stay there until the day when the trumpet is blown and all dead will rise and enter the abode of Resurrection. The term *barzakh* literally means the distance between two abodes; hence the realm between this world and the Resurrection is called *barzakh.*

There are two worlds that exist between the material world and the world of Divine Names and Attributes. One is the archetypal world (*'ālam-i mithāl*) and the other is the abode of Resurrection of the soul (*nafs*). Until a man goes through the archetypal world, he will not reach the realm of Resurrection, and unless he goes through these two abodes, he will not reach the realm of Divine Names and Attributes. In other words, reaching the realm of God's Names and Attributes is contingent upon going through the intermediate world (purgatory) and the world of the Resurrection of the soul. What we have in mind here is the abode of the Greater Resurrection of the soul (*Qiyāmat al-kubrā yi anfusīyah*), as there are two realms that are called by this name. One is the Lesser Resurrection (*Qiyāmat al-ṣughrā*), which denotes dying and entering the

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[218] Qur'an 23: 99–100.

intermediate world (purgatory), as the Prophet said: "The day a man dies, that is the day of his Resurrection."[219] The second is the Greater Resurrection of the soul (*Qiyāmat al-kubrā yi anfusīyah*), which denotes leaving the intermediate world (purgatory). When people leave their graves and go towards the abode of theophany of the Universal Soul, the Greater Resurrection of their souls begins.

The material world consists of prime matter/*hyle* (*hayūlā*), nature, corporeal existence, and things related to it. The world of the soul (*'ālam-i nafs*) is totally detached from matter as is anything related to it, such as quality and quantity (*kamm-o-kayf*), and time and space (*ayn*).

Matter is a substance that accepts form. A particular form is imposed on a substance and as a result it acquires qualities that such a form demands. It is in this manner that matter finds different forms and qualities in the world, such as dust, water, and the human body. A being that belongs to the intermediate world (purgatory) does not possess mater, but has form, quality, and quantity, and all other accidents, such as measure and skin color. In that realm people's faces and color are defined, and their faces reflect joy and happiness or anger and anxiety and light. In short, beings in the intermediate realm (*barzakh*) possess corporeality but not matter and prime matter.

The intermediate world (*barzakh*) is also called the "imaginal world" (*'ālam-i khiyāl*). The term "imaginal" denotes a world of pure form that lacks matter. Consciousness of the presence of form and the absence of matter in the intermediate world (purgatory) necessitates certain specific qualities that exist in that abode; for example, forms in the imaginal world are much bigger and stronger, their movements are faster, and their happiness or sadness is deeper and more profound, because matter, which acts as a veil for these qualities, is absent there. This is the detached imaginal world (*khiyāl-i munfaṣil*). There also exists the subordinate imaginal world (*khiyāl muttaṣil*). This is the world of man's faculty of imagination and is part of

[219] [Abu Ḥāmid Muhammad] al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā 'ulūm al-Dīn*, chapter on death, vol. VI, p. 423.

his corporeal and physical being. Once a man dies, this faculty leaves his body, and then it is called the "detached imaginal" (*khiyāl munfaṣil*) faculty. Thus all beings in the intermediary world are detached imaginal or detached archetypal, as opposed to subordinate imaginal (*khiyāl-i muttaṣil*).

The imaginal world is not illusory or false. It truly exists and is real. It is much vaster than the world of matter, its beings are thousands of times stronger and more marvelous, and their faculties and effects are more important. For example, a human beings possesses a body and physical form whose limits are defined and clear, whereas the very same human being has also faculties such as imagination, intellection, memory, fear, and the like that are much stronger and less limited. These faculties are much stronger than human physical beings and can do several things simultaneously. Similarly, this comparison and proportionality can be applied to the intermediate world (purgatory) in relation to the material world we live in. Everything there is much bigger and stronger than things in the material world. For example, in the world of dreams, which is similar to but smaller and more limited than the intermediate world (purgatory), everything is stronger and bigger, and actions, pleasures, pains, and fears are much more intense than in the material world. We can fly in the sky or swim through the oceans in one moment, but can never do so in the material world.

The same proportional relation exists between the world of the Greater Resurrection of the soul (*'ālam-i Qiyāmat-i kubrā-yi nafs*) and the intermediate world (purgatory). Since the world of the soul is detached from the world of form, it does not possess the accidents of form such as quality or quantity. Therefore, in comparison to the intermediate world, it is bigger, vaster, and more majestic. Our world is a mirror of the intermediate world, and the intermediate world in turn is a mirror of world of the Greater Resurrection of the soul (*'ālam-i Qiyāmat-i kubrā-yi nafs*), and the latter is a mirror of the world of Divine Names and Attributes. Similarly, as man's corporeal being is a mirror to his faculty of imagination, this faculty is a

mirror to his rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqah*), and the latter in turn is a mirror to the Universal Soul. The further we advance in these worlds and see the Absolute, the vaster and bigger the world emerges. This is exactly like a human figure that finds reflection in a mirror. Such a form in a mirror is only an allusion to and reflection of that particular human figure, and does not say anything about the reality of the possessor of that form or its color or size. It does not show the character, generosity, courage, or other spiritual qualities of that person, let alone his rational faculty, which is formless. Therefore, whatever we observe in this world is just an example of the intermediate world, for that world is so vast and majestic that it cannot be seen or perceived with the five senses. These senses are created for communication with the world of nature and matter, and not higher realities. The realities of the intermediate world cannot be demonstrated in the mirror of the material world. Whatever the material world demonstrates is in proportion with its own capacity and not more. Similarly, the realities of the world of the Greater Resurrection of the soul (*'ālam-i Qiyāmat-i kubrā-yi nafs*) cannot be brought down to the confines of the intermediate world except to the extent of its capacity, and nothing more.

If one can imagine oneself floating in the vast sky, one will be able to notice how small and insignificant one's body is in relation to it. The relationship between the world of nature and the intermediate world (purgatory) is also like this. If we can say that the world of the *nafs* is the abode of the Divine Footstool (*'arsh*) and the intermediate world is the abode of the Divine Throne (*al-Kursī*), their relation to one another as well as to the world of nature becomes clear.

It has been narrated on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq that one day Abū Dharr asked the Prophet: "O Messenger of God, among the verses revealed to you, which one is the best and most superior to others?" The Prophet answered, "The *Āyat al-Kursi* (2: 254)! The seven heavens and seven earths in relation to the Divine Throne are like a ring lost in a vast and endless desert.

and the relation between God's status and that of the Throne is just like that ring lost in the desert."[220]

Among philosophers, Ibn Sīnā believed that the imaginal world was an extension of the world of matter and therefore did not believe in the existence of the disengaged imaginal world. According to his argument, in order for the intermediate world to have separate existence, it must possess material existence, and a world composed of pure form without matter cannot exist. Therefore, he did not believe that the intermediate world exists. However, he believed in the existence of the disengaged rational soul and presented reasons to prove its existence. Some philosophers argue that Ibn Sīnā believed in the existence of the disengaged imaginal world according to some of his statements regarding the gradation of existence.

Other thinkers such as Mullā Ṣadrā and Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī believe in the existence of the disengaged imaginal world and present arguments that are available in their writings, and interested readers can refer to them. It must be known that the processes that man faces in the intermediate world (purgatory), such as questioning and reckoning, punishment or reward, all pertain to his archetypal body, not the body that is placed in the grave. The archetypal body, which is his human form, does not die. It remains alive, and its perception grows. All events occur after death descends upon that body. The reason that in some narrations we read about the pain of the grave, the coming of angels of interrogation (Nakīr and Munkar) in the grave, and the like is because the intermediate world comes immediately after the material world, as life in the grave starts immediately after life in the world ends.

Of course, on the Day of Judgment, man's soul will be questioned and punished or rewarded along with his body, for [belief in] physical Resurrection is a necessary part of the faith. God willing, we shall discuss the question of bodily Resurrection in the coming chapters.

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[220] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, 2: 352.

In addition to logical demonstration (*burhān*) provided by religious sciences and transcendental philosophy to prove the existence of those worlds, that is, the plane of nature, the intermediate world, and the world of Resurrection, our own common sense and consciousness also provides a testimony to the reality of those planes of existence. In other world we possess three levels of existence:

a. Our body that is from and belongs to the world of nature and matter (*'ālam-i ṭab'*). Our physical being along with all its organs and cells is in a constant state of substantial motion, change, and transformation from one state to another, new states replacing the old ones.

b. Then there is a more subtle plane of our existence, which is our mind. It possesses faculties such as intellection, imagination, memorization, fear, and the like. It can take many forms itself and give forms to other things. Our mind is not material and does not possess weight but can possess the effects of matter such as form, pleasure, pain, and the like. We can will and create beings in our mind that we cannot create in the world of matter because of its density. The body's motion is contingent upon the imagination of the mind. To perform any action we first imagine it, then learn its effects, and finally act mentally; then our body acts accordingly.

c. This third plane of our existence is the reality of our existence, which is our soul. It is much higher, more subtle, and vaster than our physical being and mind because it lacks form. This is the same quiddity by which we identify ourselves. This faculty is much higher than our human qualities and faculties because all other faculties are dependent on and supported (*qa'im*) by the soul. This is a reality detached from form, matter, and its effects.

The three planes of our existence are a microcosm (*'ālaim-i-Ṣaghīr*) and a mirror of the three planes of the world of existence or macrocosm (*'ālaim-i- kulli* [*kabīr*]). Our body is an example of the world of nature and *hyle* (*hayūla*); our mind and imaginal faculty (*khiyāl-i muttaṣil*) is a mirror of the intermediate world. Finally, our detached reality (*khiyāl-i*

munfaṣil) is an example of the world of Resurrection of the soul (*'ālam-i Qiyāmat-i kubrā-yi nafs*). The Prophet alluded to the three planes of existence in a prayer that he reportedly uttered on the night of the birth of the Mahdi (15th of Sha'bān):

> O my Lord, my mind and my body
> have prostrated before You;
> and my heart confessed its faith in You
> These hands of mine are filled with sins
> that I have committed against myself
> You are the Greatest! Forgive my great sins
> for no one but You can forgive my sins.[221]

Imām 'Ali eloquently described these planes of existence in his poetry,

> O man, your cure is within you, you understand not.
> and so is your pain and you do not see
> You assume that you are a small particle
> but there is a whole universe within you
> the greatest macrocosm
> You are a clear book of [your Lord] and
> every letter of that book reveals [God's] mysteries
> You do not need anything extraneous to your own being
> to inform you that which is written in that book.[222]

The late Ḥajj Mīrzā Javad Malekī Tabrīzī in his book titled *al-Murāqibāt* ("Contemplations") wrote,

> Among the most important rituals one must perform on the night of the 15th of Sha'bān is a number of prostrations in which special prayers are recited, and in some of those prayers allusions are made to the three planes of human existence. In part of those prayers it is repeated, "To You prostrates my body, my mind, and my soul."

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[221] Mohammad ibn Ḥasan Ṭūsī, known commonly as Shaykh Ṭūsī and Shaykh al-Ṭāyfah (385–460/995–1068), *Miṣbaḥ al-mutahajid*, lithograph edition, n.d., pp. 585.

[222] 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Divān*, lithograph edition, section on poem ending with the letter R.

> This is an allusion to the sensible world that consists of matter and body, the archetypal world that consists of form and spirit, and the realm of the truth that makes a human being who he is, that is the reality of his existence. The latter is the world in which matter and form do not exist. It is the subtle world of Divine Reality where *"whoever knows it knows his self."*[223] In other words, man's knowledge of his self becomes a means of knowing his Lord, Most High.[224]

There is a remarkably insightful narration attributed to Imām 'Ali and quoted in many sources regarding the world of the grave and angels of interrogation (Nakīr and Munkar) when they question the deceased on the first night in the grave:

> When the son of Adam is about to leave this world on his last day on earth and start the first day of life in the Hereafter, three things appear to him in their archetypal forms: his wealth, his children, and his deeds.
>
> He turns to his wealth and says, "Indeed I was very greedy in collecting you and was jealous in protecting you. Now what do you have for me in this hour of trial?"
>
> His wealth will tell him, "Take your shroud from me!"
>
> Then he turns to his children and says, "By God I love you all very much and protected you at all times. What do you have for me now?"
>
> His children will reply, "We will accompany you towards your grave and will bury you there."
>
> Then he turns to his deeds and says, "Indeed I tried to be pious and righteous but it was difficult and your task was heavy for me. What do you have for me in this moment?"

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223 This is the famous *hadīth* of the Prophet, "He who knows his own self will know his Lord. *Man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu.*

224 *al-Murāqibāt*, p. 85

His deeds will answer, "I will be your companion in your grave and on the Day of Judgment until you and I are present before God."[225]

The late Hajj Mīrzā Javad Anṣārī Ḥamadānī narrated:

One day I was walking in the one of the streets of Ḥamadān. I saw a group of people participating in a funeral procession. Suddenly the archetypal soul of the deceased man appeared before my eyes. His soul was begging people not to take him to the dark abode they were walking towards. But nobody could hear him. I knew the deceased man. He was the governor of Ḥamadān and a very brutal man.

I narrated this story to make a point, that this world is not a chaotic and lawless abode but has its own order and rules. God has granted us two precious faculties. One is the inner faculty of intellect (*'aql*), and the other one is the outward power of religion and the manner of the Friends of God. Man must know that this world is not an abode of vain play and that he was not created without a purpose and must never walk on the path of sin and error, as the Qur'an says: *"What, did you think that We created you only for sport, and that you would not be returned to Us?"*[226]

As a famous Persian poet has described,

The turning of this blue sky day after day
Or its turning around the moon and the sun
Do not think that this world is a purposeless realm
or it is a shallow and perfunctory abode.[227]

It was not accidental that whenever the Commander of the Faithful (Imām 'Ali) came across the following verse, he

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[225] Narrated in [Mohammad Bāqir Majlisī], *Biḥār al-anwār, The Book of Justice and Return*, vol. 6, pp. 224–228. This is a summary of the original version, which is much longer, and it is summarized here.
[226] Qur'an 23: 115.
[227] Nezāmī Ganjavi, *Sharaf nāmah*. See section on "The Battle between Dārā and Iskandar." Tehran: 1380/1991.

whispered it repeatedly to himself: *"What, does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will?"*[228]

If a man commits a sin in a remote place, he may assume that since no one was there to see him, then nobody is aware of his sin, not realizing that God is there and angels are there, and that all our deeds and states are recorded. If they do not question him today, they will nonetheless question him later tomorrow. Those who reckon their own account have chosen the safest and easiest course. They will rest in the safety of the divine Precinct in the best possible way. In contrast, those who believe this world is aimless and no one has governance over it commit oppression and injustice. They will be in trouble at the time of death, when angels of death question them, or when they face torment in the grave, on the Day of Judgment, and when they enter hell. In other words, if a man does not scrutinize his account in this world, they will do it for him tomorrow [on the Day of Judgment] and he will be embarrassed. As the Prophet said, "This world is a like a farmland for the Hereafter." In the Hereafter man will harvest what he plants in it today. Imām Ṣādiq said, "Beware! Scrutinize the account of your soul before they do it for you. Indeed on the Day of Judgment there will be 50 stations where they will stop you and you will wait for 1000 years in each of those stations."[229]

And Imām Musā Kaẓim said, "He who does not scrutinize his account every single day is not one of us. If he does a good deed he will ask God to enable him to do more good. If he commits an evil, he will repent and ask God for forgiveness."[230]

Man must do his best to please God by always doing good deeds and avoiding committing sins, as the Prophet said:

> When God is pleased with His servant, He will command the Angel of Death, "Go to him and bring his soul to me. Whatever good deed he has done is sufficient. I have tested him and found him in places I like."

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[228] Qur'an 75: 35.
[229] As narrated in *Biḥār* [*al-anwār*], vol. 15, part II, p. 40.
[230] Kulayni, *Uṣūl al-kāfi*, vol. II, p. 453.

Then the Angel of Death goes to that person along with 500 other angels carrying with them saffron petals and other flowers. Each angel gives the person a good tiding different from that of the other angel. With flowers in their hands, they all stand in two lines waiting to take his soul. At this moment Satan sees this scene, screams, and blames his subordinates for not being able to deceive the man, telling them, "Do you not see how this man is loved and respected [by God]?"

Satan's servants will say, "We tried and did our best. However, he did not obey us [no matter how much we tried]."[231]

[231] Narrated in *Biḥār al-anwār*, chapter on "Divine Justice and the Return," vol. 6, p. 161.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twelfth Discourse

Distinctions between the World of Nature, the Intermediate World, and the Realm of Resurrection—II

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Count not those who were slain in God's way as dead, but rather living with their Lord, by Him provided, rejoicing in the bounty that God has given them, and joyful in those who remain behind and have not joined them, because no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow, joyful in blessing and bounty from God, and that God leaves not to waste the wage of the believers.*[232]

It was mentioned previously that after death the human spirit goes to the intermediate world, which is the world of pure form where matter does not exist. Man's archetypal form is different from his corporeal form, and it encompasses and defines its form. For example, in a state of dreaming, man acts in his archetypal world and finds a reality and existence is his dream. He finds himself alive and able to move, act, and talk while his body is calm and motionless and does not act. The state that a man finds himself in in a dream is indeed his archetypal form that has detached itself from his physical being.

In the ordinary state of wakefulness, however, the archetypal form unites with the body, and its actions are demonstrated through the body. Therefore, man's bodily actions are in fact actions of the archetypal soul. While man is asleep his archetypal form manifests its reality and it becomes detached from the man's corporeal existence.

The same process takes place in the world of the Greater Resurrection of the soul (*Qiyāmat al-kubrā yi anfusīyaḥ*) where

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[232] Qur'an 3: 169–171.

the reality of the soul becomes detached from its archetypal form and the soul manifests itself in its own pure and formless reality.

In the material world where we live and where man's archetypal form is united with his corporeal form, his spirit and all other faculties of the soul are united with them. In other words, all dimensions of man's existence are united with one another. With the coming of death, first man's body separates from his archetypal form, and when the latter enters the world of the Resurrection of the soul, it separates from its own form as well. The spirit then becomes fully conscious of its true detached reality. The archetypal world is called the abode of the Lesser Resurrection (*Qiyāmat-i ṣughrā*) and the world of the spirit is known as the realm of the Greater Resurrection (*Qiyāmat-i kubrā*). In short, all these three aspects of human existence are together in the material world but are not on the same level. The archetypal form encompasses and dominates the body, and the soul encompasses and dominates the archetypal form. Unfortunately, when man becomes preoccupied with the world of nature (*'ālam-i ṭab'*), he thinks that his body constitutes the reality of his existence without being aware of his archetypal existence or the reality of his soul. He does not realize that the body is just a shell and a frame for the archetypal form and the spirit.

Similarly, in the intermediate world man assumes that his archetypal existence is his only reality. However, when the soul finds its own reality and attains total detachment, man realizes that the reality of his existence is his soul, which is a much higher and more exalted state of existence than the corporeal planes of existence.

For some people who observe the commands of the *Sharī'ah* and also travel on the path of spiritual wayfaring it is possible to experience death by choice. In other words, while they are alive, they can transcend their body and assume their archetypal form of existence. Some people may even be able to transcend their archetype and assume the form of their disengaged spirit and then come back to life like ordinary people.

Some people think that God has created an independent existence for man in the intermediate world that the spirit enters into after death. As we mentioned before, man's archetypal existence is united with his reality and at the time of death it leaves the body, and no other body outside the reality of the archetype exists. Some people even believe that the archetypal existence is meaningless altogether and what remains after death are elements of man's subtle body that were the foundation of his life. When the body dies and disintegrates, those subtle elements remain alive and they experience reward or punishment. This is not correct either, because those elements are composed of material substance. Reward and punishment pertain to the form that has left the world and attained total disengagement from the body, and not to matter.

One of the reasons we can present to prove the continuity of life after death is indeed the very same verse we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, that those who die in the path of God are not dead but are alive and receive their sustenance from Him. They are happy and free of sorrow and anxiety, for they have reached the station of sanctity (*wilāyah*) that is the station of perfect servanthood to God. Therefore, they are given the good tidings that fear and anxiety that are the result of duality are removed from them entirely, and *"God leaves not to waste the wage of the believers."* The verse does not say that they are dead and on the Day of Judgment they will be revived. Rather it says that they are alive. This is the proof that life exists in the intermediate world, and every human being is alive there, but only those who died on the path of God receive their sustenance from Him.

In the science of transcendental philosophy it is proved that the sustenance of disengaged substances is from God's Names and Attributes. When they are exposed to Divine Names and Attributes and God's Unity manifests Itself in their being, the substance of their being becomes luminous and receives sustenance from God's knowledge, and all their being experiences such joy and pleasure that it cannot be described. Since this knowledge is a sustenance from God, it is much more

enjoyable for them because God has paid special attention to them by having Himself manifested in the disengaged substance of their being, and His Names and Attributes have found theophany there. Other verses give further testimony to this reality when God says, "*And say not of those slain in God's way, 'They are dead'; rather they are living, but you are not aware.*" Whereas in another verse concerning Noah's family, He says: "*And because of their transgressions they were drowned, and admitted into a Fire, for they found not, apart from God, any to help them.*"

That is, once Noah's family drowned, they immediately entered fire because they disbelieved. Conversely, God gives the believers the good tidings of paradise in the company of saints and God's special servants: "*O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise!*[233]

In describing the throes of death and God's nearness to a man at the moment of death, God says,

> *Then, if he be of those brought nigh the Throne, there shall be repose and ease, and a Garden of Delight; and if he be a Companion of the Right: "Peace be upon thee, Companion of the Right!" But if he be of them that cried lies, and went astray, there shall be a hospitality of boiling water and the roasting in Hell.*[234]

In other words, immediately after death those who are brought nigh to the Throne enter heaven and enjoy all God's bounties. The Companion of the Right will be greeted by God, and those who went astray will be punished by the fire of hell. The verse emphasizes the fact that granting rewards and punishments in fact takes place immediately after death.

It has been narrated that when the Prophet defeated his enemies in the Battle of Badr,[235] he stopped at the water well and addressed their dead bodies saying, "How terribly evil

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[233] Qur'an 89: 27–30.
[234] Qur'an 56: 88–94.
[235] On this battle see Lings, op. cit., pp. 146–152.

neighbors you were for God's Messenger! You forced him out of his home and out of his hometown. Then you gathered together and fought against him. Indeed I realize what my Lord promised me was true."

'Umar [ibn Khaṭṭāb] then asked him, "O Messenger of God! what is the benefit of addressing the dead bodies?"

The Prophet then replied, "Be quiet O son of Khaṭṭāb! By God you are a better listener than them. Unless I turn my head the other way I can see that there is no distance left between them and angels who have a metal mallet in their hands ready to hit them in their head."[236]

Indeed what the Messenger uttered on another occasion is further evidence that there is life in the intermediate world, when he said, "The grave [can be] a garden among gardens of paradise, or [it can be] a ditch among the ditches of hell."[237]

Another piece of evidence for the existence of life in the intermediate world is presented in a few other sayings of the Prophet, as he said, "When a man dies, indeed his Day of Resurrection has started";[238] and, "Indeed friends of God do not die but they are transferred from one house to another house." Therefore, all pieces of evidence suggest that rewards and punishment in the intermediate world also provide reasons for the existence of life in that abode.

Commenting on verse 3 of chapter 71 in *Majma' al-bayān*,[239] Shaykh Ṭabarsī narrates that when Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib was martyred in the battle of *mu'tah*,[240] the Prophet said,

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[236] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, pp. 254–255.
[237] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 205.
[238] al-Ghazzīlī, *Iḥya 'ulum al-Dīn*, vol. 4, p. 423.
[239] See the verse at the beginning of this chapter.
[240] This battle took place in the year of 8/630 between Muslims and the Romans, who defeated Muslim forces. Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib was appointed as the commander of the Muslim army in this war. Another report recorded Zayd ibn Ḥarith as the commander. See Lings, op. cit., pp. 288–292. See also Seyyed Ja'far Shahīdi, *Tarikh-i taḥlili-ye islam*, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1326/1983.

"By God I saw Ja'far, who was flying in the company of two angels from heaven."

Shaykh Ṭabarsī narrates a conversation that took place between Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and a *zindīq*[241] who asked the Imām the following questions:

—Where does the soul settle after death?

—It settles in the inner abode of the earth until the designated day that is the beginning of the end of time.

—What about the soul of a person who is killed by being hanged, where does it go?

—His soul will remain alive till the day they blow the trumpet. On that day all things will remain of the sensibilia. Then all things shall return to life as God had created them in their original form. This period extends between the first and the second time the trumpet is blown and will last for 400 years.[242]

Imām Ṣādiq then narrates that the Prophet participated in bare feet in the funeral of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh[243] and performed all the rituals of burial himself. Upon seeing this scene, Sa'd's mother said, "O Son! May you rest in peace in this paradise that you are entering now." When the Prophet heard this he said, "O Mother of Sa'd! Never issue a verdict before God ordains what He ordains. Always ask Him for mercy. Your statement made your son feel the pain of the grave.

After the funeral ceremony ended people asked the Prophet why Sa'd felt the pain of the grave although the Prophet himself buried him. The Prophet replied, "Because Sa'd mistreated his household and abused them. That is why he felt the pain of the grave."[244]

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[241] The term *zindīq* is used to identify a follower of Manicheism. Sometime it is used to denote non-believers. See Mo'īn, *Farhang-i Mo'īn*, p. 540.

[242] Ṭabarsī, *Iḥtijāj*, Najaf, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 96–97.

[243] One of the close companions of the Prophet who participated in major battles. When he died, the Prophet attended his funeral and led the prayer for the dead. (*ṣalāt al-jināzah*). See Lings, pp. 112 and 189.

[244] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Āmālī*, vol. II, pp. 41–42 (Najaf edition).

An incident happened in this world to the late Ayatullah Mullā Muhammad Narāqī[245] that we must take heed of and learn from, and we present a summary of that event here. He narrated:

> One early evening when I was young and poor I went to the Wādi al-Salām cemetery in Najaf to make a pilgrimage and pray for the dead. A group of people brought a corpse for burial and hastily buried it. They asked me to perform the rituals and prayer for the dead and I accepted. When I looked inside the grave, heaven appeared to me and I saw the dead man sitting in a luxurious room, greeting people. He told me, "This garden is my paradise in the intermediate world and I will have to wait here till the trumpet is blown."

Indeed these are gifts that God grants to His friends as we read in the Qur'an in relation to Mary, *"Whenever Zachariah went in to her in the Sanctuary, he found her provisioned. 'Mary,' he said, 'how comes this to thee?' 'From God,' she said. Truly God provisions whomsoever He will without reckoning."*

Similar stories have been narrated in relation to Faṭimah. It is said that one day there was no food in 'Ali's house and he only had one *dinār* to go and buy food. He left home and on his way he came across Miqdād ibn Aswad, who was very poor. 'Ali gave him the money he had and went to the mosque to pray. After performing the afternoon prayer, the Messenger of God took 'Ali's hand and they walked together to his house. They noticed that Faṭimah was praying and lunch was ready, so elaborate and tasty that the Prophet praised it. Then he put his hand on the shoulder of 'Ali and said to him, "This is the reward for your good deed to Miqdād. Truly, "*God provisions whomsoever He will without reckoning.*"[246]

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[245] Mullā Muhammad Mehdi Narāqī was born in Naruq, a village near Kashan, in 1128/1716, received his education in Isfahan, and then moved to Karbala to continue his education. He returned to Kashan in 1383/1795. His writings include treatises on jurisprudence, narration, biography, philosophy, and ethics. Most famous of these is the three-volume *Jami' al-Sa'adah.*

[246] *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 10, p. 10 (Kompani edition) and vol. 43, p. 29 (Akhundi edition).

Indeed, hunger and thirst for God's pleasure and with the intention of attaining nearness to Him is a table spread with food from heaven and without a doubt will be given to those who traverse on this path.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirteenth Discourse

Purgatory: The End of Felicity or Wretchedness

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *...the day it comes, no soul shall speak save by His leave; some of them shall be wretched and some happy. As for the wretched, they shall be in the Fire, wherein there shall be for them moaning and sighing, therein dwelling forever, so long as the heavens and earth abide, save as thy Lord will; surely thy Lord accomplishes what He desires. And as for the happy, they shall be in Paradise, therein dwelling forever, so long as the heavens and earth abide, save as thy Lord will—for a gift unbroken.*[247]

In his commentary on these verses, 'Ali ibn Ibrāhīm Qumī[248] writes that these verses refer to the intermediate world (*barzakh*) before the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. What is meant by "eternally in fire" means eternally in the fire of purgatory as long as heaven and earth stand; and the believers' eternal lives in paradise refers to their state in the intermediate world, which will be eventually connected to the paradise that will be awaiting them on the Day of Judgment. These verses address those people who do not believe in the torment of the grave, nor do they accept that punishment and reward do exist in the intermediate world.[249]

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[247] Qur'an 11: 105–108.

[248] One of the most important Shī'a jurists, and a contemporary of the 11th and 12th Imāms (d. 307/920). A scholar of *Ḥadīth* and narrations of the Imāms who reportedly collected over 7000 *aḥādīth*. His most important book is his commentary on the Qur'an.

[249] Ali ibn Ibrahim Qumī, *Tafsīr*, Lithograph edition, 1313/1934, pp. 314–315.

If we reflect we will realize that the intermediate world is a continuation of this world where form, quantity, and quality do exist, and that is the reason its paradise and hell are related to earthly paradise and hell. The verses in fact refer to those people who deny the possibility of the continuation of reward and punishment in the intermediate world, even though the verses clearly say *"as long as the heaven and earth stand."* They do not realize that heaven and earth will perish on the Day of Judgment. There are many other verses that refer to the same reality and inform us of punishment and reward in the intermediate world.[250]

According to Imām Ṣādiq what is meant here by the intermediate world is the grave (the realm between this world and the Hereafter) where people receive reward or punishment in consideration of their deeds. His statement also is substantiated by a narration where he said, "By God! We are not worried about you except in the intermediate world, but on the Day of Judgment we are not concerned, because that day we will intercede before God on your behalf.

In short, all these verses that allude to the existence of reward and punishment in the intermediate world are in fact supported by other verses in which it is clearly stated that at the end of time and when Resurrection takes place, the existence of the earth, stars, mountains, and ocean will come to an end. On such a day the skies will disappear, the earth will open up, the sun will turn dark, and the stars will fall down. The universe will become different from what we have known. We must reflect on these verses of the Qur'an and take heed.

> *When heaven is rent asunder and gives ear to its Lord, and is fitly disposed; when earth is stretched out and casts forth what is in it, and voids itself.*[251]

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[250] See for example Qur'an 40: 46, 19: 62, and 23: 100.
[251] Qur'an 84: 1–2.

When heaven is split open, when the stars are scattered, when the seas swarm over, when the tombs are overthrown.[252]

When the sun shall be darkened, when the stars shall be thrown down, when the mountains shall be set moving.[253]

Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens and they sally forth unto God, the One, the Omnipotent.[254]

The day that men shall be like scattered moths, and the mountains shall be like plucked wool-tufts.[255]

Upon the day when heaven shall be as molten copper and the mountains shall be as plucked wool-tufts.[256]

The verses mentioned above explain the signs and symbols of the Greatest Resurrection and the way the soul finds manifestation. Since the soul is beyond form and its reality is not entified by quality and quantity, in that realm heaven and earth, stars and mountains will have different realities from their conventional forms.

As a result, all verses that deal with bounties of heaven or torments of hell whose existence is contingent upon the survival and continuation of [the life] of heaven and earth in fact refer to heaven and earth in the intermediate world, because in purgatory also heaven and hell exist because form exists in that realm. Its inhabitants are aware of the existence of heaven and earth in the world [of matter]. Their own lives, however, appear in their celestial form in the Dominion [of earth and heaven]. Likewise, verses that refer to time and space, to the sun and the moon, day or night, and celestial spheres (*aflāk*) and heaven and

[252] Qur'an 82: 1–2.
[253] Qur'an 81: 1–2.
[254] Qur'an 14: 48.
[255] Qur'an 101: 4–5.
[256] Qur'an 70: 8–9.

earth, or substantial motion (*al-harakat al-jawharīyah*) in their existence, in fact relate to the intermediate world (*barzakh*) because in the abode of the Greatest Resurrection, no earth, heaven, motion, or time exist.

The content and the tone of the verse that was mentioned previously indicate that the moment of death marks the beginning of the purgatory where man loses his will power. The angels of death and the angels of the intermediate world deal with man's reality and his soul. They do not speak with him with human language and therefore he cannot lie or speak out of expediency. The angels take man's spirit and abandon his body. Since the spirit has an interest in the well-being of the body, it follows the body and watches over it. Therefore, in the intermediate world man sees himself in his archetypal form, because that realm is the abode of the truth, where felicity and wretchedness are the same. Therefore, it is meaningless to speak of lying and manipulation, for lying is the result of a discrepancy between the truth and man's conscience as well as the absence of harmony between man's words and the content of his heart.

In this world man may be truthful and not commit sins because of considerations of factors other than God's pleasure, such as his reputation and fame in society. Otherwise, if these considerations did not exist he might have committed sins without concern for God's punishment. All these contradictory behaviors and discrepancies are the result of differences between man's outward and inward states that are possible only in this world. In the intermediate world there is no difference between the inward and outward being of man. Whatever goes in his heart is accepted and approved by his archetypal being as well. In that realm, they will ask a man, "Who is your Lord (*man rabbuka*)?" He will respond by introducing who his Lord was in the world.

The word "god" (*ilāh*) means that which man's heart is focused on in this world, that which is always with him. He circumambulates around its sanctuary and fills his heart in seclusion and among people, and is constantly preoccupied

with it, and in short worships it. Some people's lord is their spouse, children, profession and wealth, knowledge, reputation, or faith, and finally, for some it is their soul and spirit.

These are gods that are scattered in the world and are worshiped by people. Each person chooses one of them in accordance with his mental constitution and taste and worships it. He prefers worshiping those gods to worshiping the Creator of heaven and earth. He belittles God, the Qur'an, and the Prophet. The Prophet Joseph (Yūsuf) said to his two cell-mates in prison, *"Say, which is better, my fellow-prisoners—many gods at variance, or God the One, the Omnipotent?"*[257]

"Many gods at variance" means those who possess spiritual authority (*wilāyat*) over the human heart and soul establish their imaginal governance of the people in the world of multiplicity. Man must direct all his deeds towards God and act for His sake wherever he is and under any circumstances in which he lives. His attachment to all multiplicities and contingent affairs, such as family, children, wealth, reputation, and the like, must be in vertical and not horizontal relation to the love of God. It is in such a situation that in response to the call of the Angel [of Death] who asks him who his Lord is, he will be able to respond, "God, Majestic is His Glory." And the angels will tell him in response, "Greeting be upon you! Ascend in the best of stations where you are welcomed in every step you take."

In contrast to this group are those people who say that their God is the Lord of heaven and earth by their tongue, but in practice do not believe in God. Their attestation to Divine Unity is just the movement of their tongue. They claim honor and piety and justice, but in practice they sell all this cheaply. Their real god is gold and silver and their appetite is as the Prophet describes the attributes of the people at the end of time: "Their gods are their bellies and their wives are the direction of their prayer (*qiblah*), and their honor is their money and wealth (*dirhams* and *dinārs*).[258]

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[257] Qur'an 12: 39.

[258] [Majlisī], *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 22, p. 453, and vol. 77, p. 97.

It is remarkable that in purgatory (*barzakh*) these will be their answers when they are asked who their Lord is. What a strange world is the world of rising of the truth and manifestation of the hidden natures where everything that is hidden in the soul gets exposed and revealed, as the Qur'an says: "*Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens and they sally forth unto God, the One, the Omnipotent.*"[259]

In fact, hiding one's intention and true nature is possible only when one is in full control of one's natural faculties so that one can speak in accordance with expediencies to avoid a scandal or punishment. A dead person who has lost all his natural faculties cannot hide his true nature and by necessity has to tell the truth.

Those who have a pure nature and are steadfast in their beliefs praise God, the Prophet, and the Imāms even if they are in a drunken state. Conversely, for those whose nature is corrupt, even in a state of drunkenness they will curse God, the Prophet, and the Imāms. In a state of sobriety, however, both of these groups stand side-by-side with no visible difference. Being drunk reveals the inner states of both groups that are hidden in the state of sobriety.

Man acts in accordance with his inner nature in his sleep in such a way that he is not able to do when he is awake, and that is the reason Imām Ṣādiq said, "Death and sleep are of the same nature." Since man's actions and utterances after death take place in his celestial state of existence, no one can experience those states while alive.

The late Ayatullah Aqa Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Golpāygāni,[260] who was one of my teachers in the field of ethics, once narrated the following story:

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[259] Qur'an 14: 48.

[260] Ayatullah Aqa Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Golpāygāni (1295–1377/1878–1958). He was a jurist, theologian, and Gnostic who was born in Golpaygan and received his early education there. He then went to Isfahan and shortly

> One day I went to the Wādi al-Salām cemetery in the holy city of Najaf. It was a hot day so I took shelter in some shade to rest and lit my pipe to relax a little. In a special state I had a vision and saw a number of souls who wore shaggy and filthy clothes. I recognized that they were among the Arab nobility when they were alive. They approached me and begged for intercession. Knowing the kind of lifestyle they had had while they were alive and the injustices they had done to people, I ignored them. I left them to God as He may accept intercession on their behalf if He wills so. If some of them were believers and were among people of faith, they still have a chance to be forgiven after they go through the torment of purgatory in order to have their souls purified [by God's grace].

As it is narrated on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq, when Imām 'Ali's mother died, he went to the Prophet and informed him of his loss. The Prophet gave him his own robe and asked him to use it as a shroud for her. Then the Prophet performed the prayer for the dead (*ṣalāt al-jināzah*) for her in such a way that he had not done for any other person until that day. Then he stepped into her grave addressing her, "O Faṭimah! Do you realize that whatever God has promised you is true?" whereupon Faṭimah responded in the affirmative. When he came out of her grave, his companions were puzzled as he had never done such a ritual for anyone before and asked him for an explanation. The Prophet said, "I gave her my robe and asked God to protect her till she enters heaven. God accepted my prayer. When I entered her grave, I asked God to open the gate of paradise for her. He accepted my prayer and she entered into a garden in paradise."

Faṭimah, the daughter of Asad, was one of the most prominent women of Islam. She was devoted to the Prophet and migrated to Mecca shortly after he went to Medina and suffered much hardship. The Messenger of God would often pray for her and would ask God to forgive her. Her tomb is in the Baqi'

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after to Najaf to continue his education. After graduation he taught in Najaf and was recognized as one of the Sources of Emulation (*marja'*).

cemetery in Medina. and believers always pray there and ask for her intercession.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Fourteenth Discourse

Man in Purgatory Appears in His Celestial State

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Hast thou not seen how God has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree—its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven; it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. So God strikes similitudes for men; haply they will remember. And the likeness of a corrupt word is as a corrupt tree—uprooted from the earth, having no establishment. God confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come; and God leads astray the evildoers; and God does what He will.*[261]

As we mentioned before, when man leaves this world, his world and existence change. The world [we live in] is an abode where true and false, felicity and wretchedness, and purity and impurity exist side-by-side. The world beyond death, however, is a different abode. It is the abode of pure sincerity and truth. Deception and treachery (*tadlīs*) and trickery and obscuration [of the truth] (*talbīs*) have no presence there. The reality of all things appears as it is and man's station is fixed once and for all. He will either be in a state of permanent felicity or eternal wretchedness. As a result any form that appears before man's eye appears as it is in its reality in heaven. Individual human beings also appear in their archetypal forms.

For example, as we noticed in earlier narrations, sometimes a good-looking person wearing fine clothes and perfume or a detestable and stinking person may appear before us, and if we ask him about his identity, he will say, "I am [the manifestation] of your actions, and I will be with you till the Day of Judgment." Therefore, man must realize in this world that his actions have

[261] Qur'an 14: 24–27.

two aspects: one which is the physical form of his actions as they appear, and the second is their essence and spirit, which can manifest sincerity and good intention, and lead to God, or conversely, may be motivated by hypocrisy, pride, pretension, and trespassing. It is also possible for one act by several people or several acts by one person to look the same outwardly, but their spirit and the intention behind them may be different. Sometimes a person may act for God's sake and sometimes to show off and impress others to enhance his reputation. In short, different people may commit one act with different intentions. Only God is aware of the intentions behind actions. When an action looks good and virtuous outwardly, it may have two different natures inwardly in accordance with the intentions of the actor. If the action was intended for God's sake, it will be pleasing to Him and will remove the veils, illuminate the soul, and bring man closer to God's sacred Precinct. Otherwise, it will be a corrupt and evil action and guide man towards hell because it is hypocritical and pretentious. Such an action is sinful and forbidden religiously, for it intends to please fellow human beings. It exhausts and corrupts the human spirit and takes away its ability to roam and fly in the firmament of the divine realm and gradually distances man from heaven, eventually dragging him towards hell.

In the intermediate world (*barzakh*) where the inward nature of human action manifests itself in a more powerful manner, these states are felt in a much stronger way. Therefore, the joy or pain associated with those acts is felt much more strongly as well. The intermediate world is a marvelous realm, and its nature and spirit are very different from our world.

In this world all people live in a human form outwardly, but their natures and traits are different. These differences in nature and character result in the different appearances and forms that each human being takes. This is one of the ways that unity manifests itself in diversity and is one of the most subtle divine sciences.

Suppose natural sciences reached such an advanced degree that they could discover the relationship between form and meaning, or the inward and outward of a human being. Only in such a case could

one identify and recognize the inward states of prophets, Imāms, and Friends of God (*awliyā'*) and their stations before God by looking at their faces and appearances. As we know, prophets and Imāms and Friends of God possessed such knowledge for they could know the character and traits of people by looking at their faces. Indeed, we can say that one of the miracles of the Qur'an is exactly this when it says: *"Say: 'Work; and God will surely see your work, and His Messenger, and the believers, and you will be returned to Him who knows the unseen and the visible."*[262]

The variety of animal forms and the differences in their appearances also derive from the quality and quantity of their traits and attributes. It is the difference in the composition of their souls that finds reflection in the variety of their physical forms and bodies. In other words, the physical form of each animal is a reflection of its soul on the lower plane of existence. Knowledge of the constitution of the soul of an animal can lead to the knowledge of the nature of its physical existence, as its physical form is a mirror to the constitution of its soul. For example, the nature of the soul of a dog is to be feisty, loyal, and aggressive. A pig is a salacious and voluptuous animal, while a sheep is a calm and peaceful one. A horse is a pure, loyal, and noble animal in nature, while an alligator is a jealous and vengeful being. The variety of natures in these animals is indeed reflected convincingly in differences in their physical appearances. The reason that in Islam consuming the meat of some animals is unlawful is not just that they may be harmful to man's physical health, but also that it inculcates the natural traits of that animal into the human nature and soul.

The human being is a creature who possesses a little of all the attributes that are given to all these animals. If he chooses to follow the command of his intellect and bring all his natural instincts and animalistic attributes under the command of his intellect, he will appear in a perfect human form in the intermediate world. Conversely, if in this world he disobeys the command of his intellect and follows his passions and animalistic traits, in the intermediate world he will appear in the

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[262] Qur'an 9: 105.

form of the animal whose traits dominate his soul. The human being is the noblest of all creatures by virtue of his intellect. If he does not actualize that faculty and fails to attain the perfect human state, inevitably he will plunge to a lower state of existence, which is the animal state. In the intermediate world he will appear in the form of that animal.

Abū Baṣīr[263] narrates that once he accompanied Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq on a journey to Mecca to perform the *Ḥajj*. During the circumambulation I asked him if God will forgive all these people who are performing the *Ḥajj*. He replied, "O Abū Baṣīr! Most of these people whom you see are indeed monkeys and swine."

Abū Baṣīr adds, "I asked him if he could show them in their true [animalistic] state. The Imām recited a prayer and touched my eyes. I saw people as monkeys and swine and became scared. He touched my eyes and again I saw them as before." The Imām then said, "O Abā Muhammad! You will be happy and joyful in paradise. They will search for you in hell and will not be able to find you. God will not gather three, or two, or one of you in hell."[264]

There are several verses in the noble Qur'an that discuss the relation between human actions and their reflection in the nature of souls in the intermediate world:

> *Those who devour the property of orphans unjustly, devour Fire in their bellies, and shall assuredly roast in a Blaze.*[265]

and,

> *Those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not expend them in the way of God—give them the good tidings of a*

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[263] Abū Baṣīr Layth Bakhtarī Murādī was a close companion of Imām Bāqir and Imām Ṣādiq, the fifth and sixth Shī'ite Imāms respectively. He was one of the four people to whom Imām Ṣādiq promised paradise. See Shaykh 'Abbās Qumī, *Hadiyat al-aḥbāb*, pp. 5–6.

[264] Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān al-Hillī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajat*, Lithograph edition, p. 175. See also, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 11, p. 126.

[265] Qur'an 4: 10.

> *painful chastisement. The day they shall be heated in the fire of hell and therewith their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded: "This is the thing you have treasured up for yourselves; therefore taste you now what you were treasuring!"*[266]

There are also many narrations that discuss human action in this world and the way they appear in the intermediate world and on the Day of Judgment. For example, the Prophet said, "Beware! Avoid committing injustice. Verily injustice leads to darkness on the Day of Judgment";[267] and "heaven is like the lands and plants that are out; in them is the like testimony to God's Oneness (*Lā ilāh illī'lLāh*)";[268] and "Anger and rage is alike a part of hell."[269]

The most revealing and alarming statement in relation to this discussion is a narration attributed to Imām Ṣādiq recorded by 'Ali ibn Ibrāhīm Qumī. According to him once the Imām quoted a story from the Prophet who said,

> When they took me to my nocturnal journey (*mi'rāj*) and I entered heaven, I saw a vast land in white color. In it I saw angels who were constructing a building using one gold brick and one silver. Occasionally they paused and stopped working. I asked them the reason for their occasional pause. They replied, "When we receive our wages we work, and when we do not, we stop working."
>
> I asked them what their wages were. They answered, "We continue to work as long as believers utter, 'Praise belongs to God, there is no god but God, and He is the Greatest,' (*Subḥun'lLah, Wa'lḥamduli'lLāh wa Lā ilāha illa'lLāh wa'lLhāhu Akbar*). When they stop, we stop working, too.

Let us now return to the comment on the verse that we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: *"Hast thou not seen*

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[266] Qur'an 9: 34–35.
[267] As quoted in al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā al-'ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. III, p. 219.
[268] Ibid, vol. XXII, p. 79.
[269] Ibid.

how God has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree—its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven."[270]

All existent things are, in a sense, God's word. They differ only in terms of their quiddity, size, and color and in expansion or contraction in existence. An existing thing is a goodly word (*kalamah ṭayyibah*), a pure tree (*shajarah ṭayyibah*), an exalted word (*kalamah 'āliyah*). These words are indeed the Names and Attributes of God, Majestic and Glorious is He. They find manifestation in individual human beings in accordance with their capacities. Each human being, therefore, becomes a symbol and a metaphor of one Divine Name or the other. In this verse, God wants to give an example of the spirit of a sincere and pure believer who has traversed through the world of sincerity (*'ālam-i ikhlāṣ*) and has attained certainty and peace. Like the pure tree, such a believer's root that is his relationship and covenant with God is solid and stable. His branches spread to the world of the Kingdom (*mulk*) and the Dominion (*malakūt*). It constantly produces fruits and brings the grace of divine abode to the human realm and becomes a source of blessing and grace. Its sweet-tasting fruits nurture and feed a multiplicity of creatures in the contingent world. A [sincere] believer is connected to God, and his heart is filled by the wine of knowledge from the ocean of divine knowledge and mysteries. He spreads such wisdom and grace to all creatures from the spring of knowledge that by the grace of God gushes forth from his heart to his tongue.[271] He traverses with certainty and steadfastness in the process of his journey from this world (experiencing the agony of death while going through purgatory, and on the Day of Resurrection) will rest in peace and "*Shall dwell amid gardens and a river in a sure abode, in*

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[270] Qur'an 14: 24–27.

[271] An allusion to the famous *hadīth* of the Prophet, "Whosoever sincerely purifies his heart for God for 40 days will find springs of wisdom gush forth from his heart and flow towards his tongue."

the presence of a King Omnipotent."[272] "*So God strikes similitudes for men; haply they will remember.*"[273]

In contrast, the example of a non-believer and rebellious man who has no understanding of the truth and prevents others from reaching the spring of truth is like an ugly tree without any connection to its root, for it was uprooted, its roots lying on the ground and drying. Such a tree is cut off from its origin and is deprived of nutrients it needs to survive, as the Qur'an says: "*And the likeness of a corrupt word is as a corrupt tree—uprooted from the earth, having no establishment.*"[274] Such people are those who have failed to purify their inner being where all kinds of ugliness, mean traits, and impurities reside. They are always in doubt and indecisive in their affairs, in doubt about God and His existence, selfish and proud in relation to other human beings, and suspicious in relation to the truth and genuine affairs. Their confidence in anything is always half-hearted and baseless. They are not genuine and lack discernment. Although they may possess wealth and power, have a good reputation in the society, and be successful in their worldly affairs, they are weak in recognizing the truth. Since such people are disconnected from God and do not rely on Him, and their hearts are not illuminated with the light of knowledge, they change with every blow of the wind, as [Imām] 'Ali said: "People are of three categories: divinely inspired scholars (*'ulamā-yi rabbānī*), those who learn on the path of salvation (*muti'allim 'alā sabīl najāt*), and those who change with the blow of the wind (*hamaj al-ra'ā'*)."[275]

As to the believers, "*God confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come.*"[276] Here the phrase "*the firm word*" is identical with the "*goodly word*" and denotes connection to the Lord. It is by virtue of this

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[272] Qur'an 54: 55.
[273] Qur'an 14: 25.
[274] Qur'an 14: 26.
[275] See *Nahj al-balāghah*, "Chapter on Advice and Words of Wisdom," vol. II, Cairo, n.d. p. 172.
[276] Qur'an 14: 27.

connection that in all stations of life a believer travels with certainty and confidence in this world and in purgatory and on the Day of Resurrection, for it is said: *"Whosoever desires glory, the glory altogether belongs to God. To Him good words go up, and the righteous deed—He uplifts it; but those who devise evil deeds—theirs shall be a terrible chastisement, and their devising shall come to naught."*[277]

The goodly word that *"gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord"* is that which goes to God and attains glory. That is the reason we read in the supplication that is recited during the month of Sha'bān, "O God! Connect me to the most blissful of the light of Your Majesty so that I know You alone and turn away from other than You."[278]

Goodly deeds are like the fuel for the engine of the soul that carries it to the divine realm that is the abode of absolute glory, pure life, and self-sufficiency. God's promise that assures believers is indeed the connection that He has allowed to be established between Him and His servant. It is this connection that results in goodly deeds, which in turn lead him to the divine realm. This is the journey of man to become what he truly can become. Only God Himself knows the joy and happiness of such a believer who travels to Him in the human state. The result of such a connection with God is friendship with and companionship of the immaculate souls of the prophets, Friends of God, people of goodly deeds (*abrār*), the righteous (*ṣāliḥīn*), and the martyrs. The perfect manifestation of this connection is actualized when God says in the famous *ḥadīth qudsi*, "My heaven and My earth cannot encompass me, but the heart of My believing servant can."[279]

In contrast, God does not guide oppressors and unjust people to the light of the straight path. Rather, such people choose their own path in accordance with the passions and desires of their carnal souls and end up in deviation and loss.

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[277] Qur'an 35: 10.

[278] Iqbal, lithograph edition, p. 687.

[279] Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-'ibād*, Tehran: Bongah-i tarjumah wa Nashr-i kitāb, 1352/1973, see pp. 208, 274, and 613.

Since their souls are not nurtured with true human qualities, they cannot take perfect human forms in the sense that the state of their souls will reflect the qualities of their carnal souls. If that form is a satanic form, the souls will be directed to the abode of Shayṭān. If it is an animal form, the soul will go to the world of animals. Such souls will never enter the human realm, as God says,

> *...and God leads astray the evildoers; and God does what He will.*[280]

and,

> *...and God wronged them not, but themselves they wronged.*[281]

or,

> *and We shall say, "Taste the chastisement of the burning—that, for what your hands have forwarded, and for that God is never unjust unto His servants."*[282]

Many people have narrated their encounters and conversations with the dead in their archetypal forms, some of whom appeared in their ordinary human forms, some in the form of luminous creatures, and some in their dark and dull forms in the intermediate world. It is narrated on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq who said,

> I was traveling to Mecca in my father's company until we reached a location called Ḍajnān. Suddenly, a man appeared with a chain around his neck. He asked me for water. My father raised his voice and told me not to give water to him, for God did not will to give him water. He was followed by

[280] Qur'an 14: 30.
[281] This verse is repeated on two occasions. See Qur'an 3: 117 and 16: 33.
[282] Qur'an 3: 182.

another man who pulled his chain and threw him into the depths of hell.

The Commander of the Faithful also narrated an incident when he met Yūsha' ibn Noon,[283] who was the legatee of Moses and who appeared to 'Ali in his normal human form. He also narrated an incident in the battle of Ṣiffin when he encountered Sham'ūn ibn Ṣafa,[284] the legatee of Jesus Christ.[285]

[283] See *Kitāb al-ikhtiṣāṣ*, lithograph edition, pp. 275–277.
[284] Al-Hillī, Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, lithograph edition, p. 80.
[285] See *Ma'ād Sheniāsi*, vol. II: p. 311a.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Fifteenth Discourse

Seeing the Archetypal Beings Necessitates Transcending the World of Multiplicity

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Say those who look not to encounter Us, "Why have the angels not been sent down on us, or why see we not our Lord?" Waxed proud they have within them, and become greatly disdainful. Upon the day that they see "A ban forbidden!" We shall advance upon what work they have done, and make it a scattered dust. The inhabitants of Paradise that day, better shall be their lodging, fairer their resting place.*[286]

Such statements from people are made out of pride and a feeling of grandiosity. When they meet the angels their affairs are determined already, for they will not receive any good tiding from the angels as a result of their rebellion, pride, and rejection of truth. They will be rejected, isolated, and prevented from entering the abode of felicity and happiness. Since their deeds in the world were not for God's pleasure and with the hope of finding proximity to Him, they will be scattered like dust. In contrast, inhabitants of paradise who hoped to meet God will rest in a safe and comfortable resting place.

The above verses are about the intermediate world (*barzakh*) and contain profound points and lessons. They explain that rebellion and rejection of God's words and His Messenger are caused by pride and arrogance (*istikbār*), which means grandiosity and a feeling of superiority over others. Therefore, as long as arrogance and pride exist in a man's soul, his path to the truth is closed, for such a rebellious nature prevents logic and reason, and justifies irrational reasons to

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[286] Qur'an 25: 21–24.

reach the rebellious soul's desired objectives. Consequently, he who possesses a proud and arrogant soul will be confined to the prison of his ignorance and will be eventually buried there. Such people will say, "We shall not believe until we see God and the angels descend upon us." How wrong are such statements before the scale of the truth! After the truthfulness of the Prophet and his connection to God and witnessing of the invisible world, and his miracles and clear proofs of them, such statements are merely pretexts and are wrong. The mission of prophets is often accompanied by miracles so that people will believe them. To make belief in them contingent upon meeting God and the angels first is impossible for ordinary people, and such a demand cannot be explained except as rebellion and a refusal to believe in the truthfulness of the saying of the Prophet. Meeting God, who cannot be contained in form with the human eye, which can only see intelligible things, is impossible. In fact, God does not consider believing after "seeing" Him as true faith, but as true infidelity. Even if hypothetically one believes that God can take a corporeal form, the very same belief itself is infidelity. How can infidelity become a base for faith? Are other paths to reach truth closed that one has to take the path of disbelief to reach the truth?

Meeting the angels requires inward purity and a connection to the Divine Kingdom, as all messengers also had to purify their hearts by God's command. Every man must cleanse his heart from the rust of passion, rage, temptation of the carnal soul, anxieties, and illusive thoughts (*khiyālāt-i tamwihīyah*) so that he can meet the angels. With a heart polluted with polytheism, low traits and mean character, and ugly deeds, this cannot be achieved.

As to seeing God, that is also possible only with the inner eye, not with the ordinary human eye. When one observes the command of the Qur'an and acts upon the guidance of the Prophet, gradually the rust that covers the heart will be removed and virtues will be inculcated in the heart through faith and struggle, and servanthood [to the Lord] will replace vices and ordinary human traits. Seeing God is contingent upon faith in

Him and following the path of the Prophet. Only then will the heart be purified and capable of attracting the light of the detached world of Dominion (*anwār-i malakutīyah*) and be able to see angels, too. It is impossible to achieve this except through faith and good deeds. There is a cause and effect relationship between these two, and the cause always supersedes the effect. He who does not possess knowledge should refer to the one who does. This is a simple command of human nature and intellect. It is common sense. Our natural instincts and intellect command us to turn to the Prophet and submit to his command. In every field in which a person lacks expertise, he must turn to experts so that their guidance will pave the way to his destination. Otherwise, he will face many dangers and threats. God has bestowed upon us a little knowledge, as He says, "*You have been given of knowledge nothing except a little.*"[287] Therefore, it is impossible to master all worldly or religious and divine sciences or abstract and detached sciences of the Divine Kingdom and put them into practice. It is impossible for one person to master all these sciences, for human capabilities are limited and his life too short to allow this. When a person gets sick and goes to a physician whose reputation, skill, and honesty he trusts, his intellect tells him to submit to the physician and listen to what he says, and act upon it. He cannot argue with him and ask for the formula of the medication he prescribes or argue over its possible side-effects and other details. Similarly, in every situation a man must turn to those who are experts and have insight in that particular field. Otherwise, he will die an ignorant death. Therefore, every man who is an expert in one field is by necessity a student and emulator in others. This has always been the law of nature and will remain so forever.

Now, imagine that some people have entered God's Dominion and argue that they will not believe until they see angels and meet God. This reminds me of a surgeon who once told me that he does not believe in God because he has not seen Him under his surgery knife. Such arguments are very similar

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[287] Qur'an 17: 85.

to the argument of agnostics and materialists (*Dahriyūn*); only the form has changed.[288] Indeed, *"Waxed proud they have within them, and become greatly disdainful."*[289]

These people do not want to submit to God's logic and reasoning. Therefore, they excuse themselves by making such statements. In reality, however, the reason is their pride and arrogance. They feel too superior and righteous to put themselves under somebody's command, even if that person is God's messenger. The evidence to prove this claim is their very own statement when they said, *"How is it that God gives His revelation to an ordinary man like us and commands us to follow him and obey him?"*[290]

This is, in a sense, a problem that many of us are afflicted with as we are doubtful about emulating a qualified religious scholar (*mujtahid*) and do not want to follow his teachings and instructions. We often argue that governance belongs to the Twelfth Imām alone and in his absence accept the injustices of oppressive governments, even though the Imām's own instruction based on religious reasons commands us differently. Similarly, we listen to our pride and arrogance when we create doubt about or deny the qualifications of a prayer leader in congregational prayer. The Qur'an calls this attitude, which in reality is a mental and psychological disorder, arrogance and pride (*istikbār*). Most often those who pretend to be pious do so out of pride, knowingly or unknowingly. They fool common people with this attitude, and people consider them pious and ascetic people. *"They go astray from a plain road."*[291]

This world is the world of matter and corporeality, whereas angels are detached from matter and free from corporeality. Their descent to earth would demand that they acquire physical

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[288]Dahrīyah is a group of atheists who worship the eternality of time (*dahr*). They deny the idea of Resurrection and believe in the eternal existence of things. See *Qawā'id al-'aqā'id*, p. 464, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, pp. 80 and 256, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 294.

[289]Qur'an 25: 21.

[290] Qur'an 54: 24. This issue has been discussed on several occasions in the Qur'an. See for example 54: 24.

[291] Qur'an 5: 12.

and material form. Angels do not have physical and material forms. Therefore, it is not possible to see them in their detached physical forms in this world. If man can ascend on high, free himself from the limitations of corporeal and physical existence, and become a detached being, he can see angels with the light of his heart. This becomes possible for all human beings after death, but it is impossible for an ordinary man in this world. When people asked the Prophet why God did not send an angel for them to obey and follow, the following verse was revealed: "*And had We made him an angel, yet assuredly We would have made him a man, and confused for them the thing which they themselves are confusing.*"[292]

Only a person who has died by choice and/or forgotten the world of multiplicity, or dies and becomes detached from this world, can see the angels, as a man on his deathbed and in the last moments of life becomes detached [from the world] and can see the Angel of Death. Desiring to see angels without meeting certain conditions and having certain qualifications is not possible. Such an expectation is against God's rules, and those who make such statements are among the violators and trespassers: "*Waxed proud they have within them, and become greatly disdainful.*"[293]

In accordance with the primordial rule and the command of the intellect one must emulate God's Messenger and follow him. This is also what the *Sharī'ah* commands. If not heard by some [so be it], the caravan of believers will travel with God's guidance and will reach "*two bows'-length away, or nearer*" (*qāb al-qawsayn o adnā*).[294] Those who are rebellious and arrogant will fall into the fire of ignorance and will be distanced

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[292] Qur'an 6: 9.

[293] Qur'an 25: 10.

[294] This is an allusion to Prophet's nocturnal journey (*mi'rāj*): "*being on the higher horizon, then drew near and suspended hung, two bows'-length away, or nearer, then revealed to his servant that he revealed.*" Qur'an 53: 8–10.

from God. Eventually, they will be afflicted with their selfishness and will be tormented and deprived.

Similarly, in chapter 53 when unbelievers reject the Prophet's message and ask for material proof for his prophethood, they make the same demands from him:

> *...or till thou makest heaven to fall upon us as thou assertest, on us in fragments, or thou bringest God and the angels as a surety, or till thou possessest a house of gold ornament, or till thou goest up into heaven; and we will not believe thy going up till thou bringest down on us a book that we may read. Say: "Glory be to my Lord. Am I aught but a mortal, a Messenger?" And naught prevented men from believing when the guidance came to them, but that they said, "Has God sent forth a mortal as Messenger?" Say: "Had there been in the earth angels walking at peace, We would have sent down upon them out of heaven an angel as Messenger." Say: "God suffices as a witness between me and you; surely He is aware of and sees His servants."*[295]

The result of this kind of arrogance is to fall distant from God. At the moment of death when such people see angels, there will be no good tidings for them, and they will be deprived of proximity to God and heaven, as the Qur'an says: "*Upon the day that they see the angels, no good tidings that day for the sinners; they shall say, 'A ban forbidden!'*"[296]

Believing after seeing is of no grace. He who believes without seeing is saved. "*Those who believe in the Unseen*," "*those are the ones who prosper.*"[297]

If it were possible for man to see paradise first and then turn to faith and good deeds, everyone would become pious and virtuous. Man's free will and ability to choose would then become meaningless. However, that paradise is the paradise of

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[295] Qur'an 53: 92–96.

[296] Qur'an 25: 22.

[297] Qur'an 2: 1 and 2: 4.

the abode of spirit (*'ālam-i dharr*),[298] not the realm of duties and obligation. To earn that paradise of which we learn in this world, one must overcome satanic desires and passions through choice, patience, and resistance to temptations. That is why people are divided into two categories, the saved (*sa'īd*) and the wretched (*shaqī*). In short one must believe and have faith in the Invisible [God] and then observe His commands. Such an attitude strengthens the faith, and strong faith in turn strengthens the actions. In other words, faith and action strengthen each other in all stages until one reaches the station of sincerity and proximity to God. The Prophet said, "He who practices what he knows, God will give him the knowledge of that which he knows not."[299] That is why in the verse cited earlier, God says, *"We shall advance upon what work they have done, and make it a scattered dust."*[300]

Since what the polytheists and infidels do is not for God's pleasure but is motivated by selfishness and hypocrisy, and for worldly purposes, their deeds have no merit before God. All their actions are like scattered moths, for they are not genuine and will not help them at all. Conversely, there are people who hope to meet the Lord. Their lives are based on faith in His oneness. They are *"People of paradise settled there well."*[301] Such people will be in peace and certainty, free from anxiety and fear of satanic thoughts at the moment of death when the Angel of Death descends. They will rest and sleep in the farthest destination (*maqṣad al-aqṣa*) and the highest house (*manzil al-asnā*) in peace and certainty.

Although it is true that there is no sleeping in the intermediate world, that is in relation to the world, not in an

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[298] *'ālam-i dharr*, The realm of the Spirit that is also called the realm of the Invisible, where God created man and made a covenant with him, asking him, "*'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yea, verily We testify.'*" See Qur'an 7: 172. See also, Mohammad Mu'īn, *Farhang-i Fārsī*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1386, p. 489.

[299] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 68, p. 363.

[300] Qur'an 25: 23.

[301] Qur'an 25: 24.

absolute way. When people live in this world they are asleep until they die. Then they wake up as the Prophet said, *"People are in a state of sleep and when they die they wake up."*[302] Therefore, the intermediate world is the abode of consciousness in relation to our world. Yet in relation to the Day of Resurrection it is the realm of sleep. There is absolute consciousness only in the world of Resurrection. Other conditions and qualities of the intermediate world that stands between this world and the next have the same quality. They are something between this world and the next. For example, life, knowledge, and power in the intermediate world are stronger than in this world but weaker than in the abode of Resurrection.

On the Day of Resurrection the inhabitants of hell will tell the God of Resurrection: *"Our Lord, Thou hast caused us to die two deaths and Thou hast given us twice to live; now we confess our sins. Is there any way to go forth?"*[303]

As death marks the beginning of life in the intermediate world, similarly, death in the intermediate world leads to life in the abode of Resurrection. Therefore, there is a relationship between death in this world and life in the intermediate world, as between death in the intermediate world and life in the abode of Resurrection. In the journey towards perfection, going to a higher station is contingent upon going through the previous station and perfecting its requirements.

The intermediate world is also called the archetypal world (*'ālam-i mithāl*). It is a mirror to the world of Resurrection and reflects it to the extent it can. In the Qur'an, life in the world of Resurrection is defined as rising up (*qiyām*) and getting ready, for by then all worlds have been passed through and it will be the time for the soul to rise and live *"Upon the day when the Hour is come."*[304] Therefore, anything that existed in the

[302] Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-'ibād*, pp. 468 and 660.
[303] Qur'an 40: 11. Two deaths refer to dying in the world and going to the *barzakh* and from there to the Day of Resurrection. Reviving twice refers to giving life in the *barzakh* after dying in the world, and reviving in the Hereafter after dying in the *barzakh*.
[304] Qur'an 30: 12.

archetypal world in terms of the lights of the soul (*anwār-i nafsīyah*) will be seen in the world of Resurrection as well, not in their entirety but within limitations of form and by way of archetypal example. All forms and states that exist in the intermediate world reflect personal characteristics of each man as he was in the world, from beauty or ugliness to felicity and wretchedness, to faith or disbelief and other personal traits.

Imām Ṣādiq said,

> When a believer answers correctly the questions that the Angels of Death (Nakīr and Munkar) ask him,[305] they create an opening in his grave as big as [the limit of] his sight; that is, they create a spiritual space for him. The limits of this space depend on the limits of the power of the sight of the believer, for the sight [i.e. stations] of the People of the Right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*), the People of Good Deed (*abrār*), those who are brought nigh (*muqarrabīn*), and the People who have been purified by God (*mukhlaṣīn*) are different from one another.[306]

The limits of the sight of the People of the Right are within the station of the world of the soul (*'ālam-i nafs*) that covers heaven and earth; that of the people who are brought nigh (*muqarrabīn*) go beyond this to the world of Divine Names and Attributes; that of the people who have been purified by God (*mukhlaṣīn*) go beyond this and end in God's sanctuary where they become annihilated in God. Here distance and proximity are removed, directions disappear, and no one but God Himself is aware of the boundaries of this station. As He has stated in the *ḥadīth qudsi*:

> I have prepared for My righteous servants things that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart has experienced. I inform you of that which I [prepared] for him. If you wish, (*sha'tom*) read this [verse of the Qur'an]. Nobody knows

[305] Nakīr and Munkar are the two angels that question the deceased on their first night in the grave.
[306] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Āmālī*, Lithograph edition, p. 174.

what I have hidden for them [My righteous servants] that eyes will be refreshed.[307]

In another *hadīth qudsī* God says,

O My servant! Obey Me so that I place you as an example. I am the Living who never dies, I will make you the living who will not die. I am the Rich who will never become poor. I will make you the rich that will not become poor! Whatever I will to become, is, and I will make whatever you will, be.[308]

All injunctions and commands of religion in fact warn human beings to wake up from negligence. "Praise belongs to Him who revives us after death and unto Him will be the Resurrection [of the dead]. Praise belongs to Him who returns my soul to me so that I praise Him and worship Him."[309]

In relation to this discussion, the Qur'an says that infidels are forgetful in the world, and when they die they will face torment and punishment. Only then will they wish to have listened to the Prophet: *"Upon the day the evildoer shall bite his hands, saying, 'Would that I had taken a way along with the Messenger!'"*[310]

However, it is too late then. Even though their plea may be sincere, this time and God is Merciful, yet their request will not be accepted, for they are no longer able to commit sins. Different and often contradictory faculties of their carnal souls are no longer present. In contrast to the world they lived in, this abode is where the light of Divine Unity shines and there is no possibility of selfishness, pride, and sinful actions. Even if we assume that God gave them another chance to return to the world again, they would commit the same sins all over again and act the same way as before: "... *and even if they were*

[307] *Kalamat'lLah*, pp. 134 and 534.
[308] Ibid, pp. 140 and 534.
[309] These two prayers are recorded in Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn Āmili (Shaykh Bahā'i) in his *Miftāh al-filāh*, p. 227.
[310] Qur'an 25: 27.

returned, they would again commit the very thing they were prohibited; they are truly liars."[311]

Therefore, their sincerity in what they say in the intermediate world is subject only to the conditions of that realm. In relation to this world and its conditions they are still dishonest and will continue to lie: *"Nay, it is but a word he speaks."*[312]

Similar situations may come to pass in this world, too. When a man becomes preoccupied with multiple tasks such as work and other responsibilities, he becomes negligent of God and relies on his own means and abilities. He turns to God only when he fails and asks for help and support from Him. When he gets sick, he only relies on the skill of the doctor and does not ask God for healing. If a man of wisdom and faith told him to seek a doctor's help to cure his sickness but ask God for healing because He is the Supreme Healer, he would call him backward and reactionary. Only when a lot of money is spent and all doctors' treatments fail to cure his sickness does he turn to God and ask Him for healing. He may give charity and help the poor then. However, what is strange is that the same person forgets God once he is cured. Again he denies God's role and belief in the Invisible, and considers these things as superstitions, thus creating a formidable obstacle between himself and God.

> *It is He who conveys you on the land and the sea; and when you are in the ship—and the ships run with them with a fair breeze, and they rejoice in it, there comes upon them a strong wind, and waves come on them from every side, and they think they are encompassed; they call upon God, making their religion His sincerely: "If Thou deliverest us from these, surely we shall be among the thankful."*[313]

In short, so long as the carnal soul is not tamed by observing the command of religion and ascetic practices, as long as the heart is not illuminated by the light of faith on the straight path,

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[311] Qur'an 6: 28.
[312] Qur'an 23: 100.
[313] Qur'an 10: 22.

man may believe and turn to God and repent when he is in a desperate situation. However, once that situation is over he will resume his old habits and act as he did before:

> *Nevertheless when He has delivered them behold, they are insolent in the earth, wrongfully. O men, your insolence is only against yourselves; the enjoyment of this present life, then unto Us you shall return, then We shall tell you what you were doing.*[314]

Man must realize that God does not do injustice to any of His servants. People do injustice to themselves with their own hand: "*...and God wronged them not, but themselves they wronged.*"[315]

Imām Ḥasan in a sermon on his deathbed to one of his disciples known as Junādah, said:

> Prepare yourself for the journey that you will embark upon soon and prepare its provisions before your time comes. Know that you are seeking the world, but death is seeking you. Do not ruin you day worrying about the day that has not arrived yet. Know that you will not own any worldly possession and wealth more than your own sustenance, but you will be the treasure-keeper of somebody else. Know that you will be accountable for what is [religiously] permissible (*ḥalāl*) and will be questioned and punished for that which is not permissible (*ḥarām*) and will be questioned and blamed for the doubtful. Think of this world like an animal corpse and take only that which is permissible and absolutely vital for survival. If it is not permissible, you will not be accountable, for you only took that which is necessary for survival in a desperate situation and you will be blamed less. Treat the world in such a way as though you will live in it forever, and treat your Hereafter as though you shall die tomorrow.[316]

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[314] Qur'an 10: 23.
[315] Qur'an 10: 23.
[316] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 10, p. 133.

One must reflect on this saying of the Imām objectively to realize how God in His infinite mercy paves the way to paradise for believers and illuminates their hearts with His light.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Sixteenth Discourse

The Downtrodden: Hope for Forgiveness

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *And those the angels take, while still they are wronging themselves—the angels will say, "In what circumstances were you?" They will say, "We were abased in the earth." The angels will say, "But was not God's earth wide, so that you might have emigrated in it?" Such men, their refuge shall be Gehenna—an evil homecoming!—except the men, women, and children who, being abased, can devise nothing and are not guided to a way; haply them God will yet pardon, for God is All-pardoning, All-forgiving.*[317]

All Muslim jurists, Shī'a and Sunni alike, consider knowledge and power, or awareness and capability, as preconditions for obeying or disobeying religious duties for any person who reaches the age of adulthood. Regarding the first condition, that is, knowledge, they base their arguments on certain verses of the Qur'an. For example:

> *We never chastise, until We send forth a Messenger.*[318]

> *And We have sent no Messenger save with the tongue of his people, that he might make all clear to them; then God leads astray whomsoever He will, and He guides whomsoever He will; and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.*[319]

> *Had We destroyed them with a chastisement aforetime, they would have said, "Our Lord, why didst Thou not send us a*

[317] Qur'an 4: 97–99.
[318] Qur'an 17: 15.
[319] Qur'an 14: 4.

> *Messenger, so that we might have followed Thy signs before that we were humiliated and degraded?"*[320]

In some other verses, God makes punishment or reward for those who obey or disobey contingent upon their knowledge and clear sign [of His command]: "*...that whosoever perished might perish by a clear sign, and by a clear sign he might live who lived; and surely God is All-hearing, All-knowing.*[321] Shī'ite jurists refer to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, known as "*Ḥadīth* Dismissal," narrated on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq according to which he said:

> My community will not be questioned or punished for nine things they may commit. These include:
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> 1. When they commit an unintended mistake;
> 2. When they do not remember to observe a duty or forget to do so;
> 3. Actions they do reluctantly or under pressure of others;
> 4. When they commit an act and do not know that God has forbidden such an action;
> 5. Things that are out of their power and beyond their ability to do;
> 6. When they do an action under duress and threat, like borrowing money with interest when they had no other choice, or breaking their fast under the pressure of an oppressive ruler;
> 7. Being jealous of someone without expressing it or acting upon it;
> 8. Actions they may commit due to anxiety, pessimism, or a bad omen;
> 9. Some doubtful thoughts that may come to someone's mind regarding God, His Power, and His creatures as long as he does not express them.

It must be mentioned, however, these rules apply when a person has no knowledge of things but has done enough

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[320] Qur'an 20: 134.
[321] Qur'an 8: 42.

investigation to find out the truth. Otherwise, he will be questioned and possibly punished because he failed to do his part and acquire knowledge about the issue he faced.

As Imām Ṣādiq said, "People cannot dismiss their duties and obligation until they search, ask, and learn."[322] In order for a man to fulfill his duties towards God, in addition to a sound intellect, he must also possess the ability to perform his religious duties with ease and expansion. There are several verses in the Qur'an that we can mention in this regard that describe God in His Attribute of Generosity (*faḍl*) towards man in this context:

> *...but God has pardoned them; God is All-forgiving, All-clement.*[323]

and,

> *God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you.*[324]

> *God does not desire to make any impediment for you; but He desires to purify you.*[325]

> *...and God has laid on you no impediment in your religion.*[326]

> *God charges no soul save with what He has given him.*[327]

> *God charges no soul save to its capacity; standing to its account is what it has earned, and against its account what it has merited.*

[322] Marfū' Barqī, *Maḥāsin*, vol. I, p. 225.
[323] Qur'an 3: 152.
[324] Qur'an 2: 185.
[325] Qur'an 5: 6.
[326] Qur'an 22: 78.
[327] Qur'an 65: 7.

Our Lord, take us not to task if we forget, or make mistake. Our Lord; charge us not with a load such as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, do Thou not burden us beyond what we have the strength to bear.

And pardon us, and forgive us, and have mercy on us; Thou art our Protector.

And help us against the people of the unbelievers.[328]

Now that we realize that man's fulfilling his duties towards God is contingent upon his knowledge of his responsibilities and his ability to fulfill them, it becomes clear that in the intermediate world there are people who will not be questioned or punished because they were not able to perform their duties towards God in this world. One such group is the downtrodden and the oppressed, some of whom may have ways to attain truth, and some others may not. In the Qur'anic terminology, the word downtrodden (*mustaḍ'af*) stands in contrast to the arrogant and proud (*mustakbar*). The arrogant people (*mustakbarīn*) are those rebellious and ambitious souls who always trespass and violate other people's rights and territories. The downtrodden are those who are oppressed and exploited, and their rights violated by the strong and the arrogant. The Qur'an describes these two groups of people in the following terms:

Now Pharaoh had exalted himself in the land and had divided its inhabitants into sects, abasing one party of them, slaughtering their sons, and sparing their women; for he was of the workers of corruption. Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors.[329]

[328] Qur'an 2: 286.
[329] Qur'an 28: 4–5.

In another verse the Qur'an uses the term *mala'* (i.e. Chieftain, Council) when it addresses the arrogant and the proud:

> *Said the Council of those of his people who waxed proud to those that were abased, to those of them who believed, "Do you know that Salih is an Envoy from his Lord?" They said, "In the Message he has been sent with we are believers." Said the ones who waxed proud, "As for us, we are unbelievers in the thing in which you believe."*[330]

Regarding the downtrodden who have the ability to attain the truth, the Qur'an says,

> *Ah, if thou couldst see when the evildoers are stationed before their Lord, bandying argument the one against the other! Those that were abased will say to those that waxed proud, "Had it not been for you, we would have been believers." Those that waxed proud will say to those that were abased, "What, did we bar you from the guidance after it came to you? Nay, rather you were sinners." And those that were abased will say to those that waxed proud, "Nay, but devising night and day, when you were ordering us to disbelieve in God, and to set up compeers to Him." They will be secretly remorseful when they see the chastisement and We put fetters on the necks of the unbelievers; shall they be recompensed except for what they were doing?*[331]

Now that the meaning of *istiḍ'āf* is clear, we must add that the first group that could have migrated to a safe place and freed itself (of *istiḍ'āf*) and did not will be questioned and punished for not taking the necessary steps, for they were able to free themselves and observe their religious duties but failed to do so. Students of the *Uṣūli* school of [Shī'a] law state that *"obligation by choice does not negate free will, as rejection by choice does not negate free will."* In other words, if a man chooses to make a discretionary act or religious ritual an

[330] Qur'an 7: 75–76.
[331] Qur'an 34: 31–33.

obligation for himself, his action does not nullify his free will to reverse his decision. Similarly, if a man rejects such an action or ritual, his action does not nullify his free will to reverse such an act either.

The second group of the downtrodden is that which has no practical or intellectual power to free itself of the oppression of the arrogant and the oppressor. There is hope that this group will be forgiven, however.

The first verse of the Qur'an mentioned in the beginning of this discourse tells us that those who remained under the dominance of the oppressors, rebelled against God, and failed to purify their souls through performing their religious and spiritual duties will be questioned by the angels of death to explain the reason for their rebellion against God.

> *The angels will say, "In what circumstances were you?" They will say, "We were abased in the earth." The angels will say, "But was not God's earth wide, so that you might have emigrated in it? Such men, their refuge shall be Gehenna—an evil homecoming!"*[332]

Hell will be the abode of such men, whereas those who were abased and were unable to emigrate or do anything else and had no guidance may enjoy God's forgiveness. There are several important conclusions to make in the said verses as follows:

1. The necessity of emigration from the abode of oppression and infidelity to the abode of faith;

2. As is understood, living in the abode of oppression and infidelity is forbidden (*ḥarām*) as it also has been emphasized in another verse, "*and God will not grant the unbelievers any way over the believers.*"[333] Even the verdicts and signature of religious judges are not valid if they live in the abode of unbelief (*dār al-kufr*). They must always live in the *dār al-Islam*;

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[332] Qur'an 4: 97–99.
[333] Qur'an 4: 141.

3. This rule applies to Muslim children and youth as well. If they can and have the means of leaving the *dār al-kufr* and settling in the *dār al-Islam* they must do so. Otherwise, they will be questioned and perhaps punished:

4. This rule does not apply, however, to the abased and downtrodden who did not have the means or guidance in the world. They will be forgiven by God.

In response to a question regarding the definition of the term *mustaḍ'af* (the abased, downtrodden), Imām Bāqir explained that the *mustaḍ'af* is a man who lacks the ability to think, differentiate between the path of faith or infidelity, and choose the right path. He is not capable of [independently] becoming a believer or non-believer. This person can be a child, or a man or woman whose faculty of intellect is like that of children. Therefore, God's Pen will record their error and exempt them from personal responsibility for their actions.[334]

Also, Imām Ṣādiq said, "The abased and downtrodden (*mustaḍ'āfīn*) are not a homogenous group. Some are very different from some others. In short, whoever faces the *qiblah* in his prayer and is not hostile to the Imāms can fall into this category."[335]

It is also narrated that Imām 'Ali said,

> Indeed, heaven has eight gates. Through one gate prophets and people of sincerity enter paradise. Another gate belongs to the martyrs and the righteous. The other five doors belong to our followers and those who love us (the *Ahl al-Bayt*). Finally, the eighth door belongs to all Muslims and those who utter the formula of Divine Unity (*Lā ilāha illa'lLah*) and in whose heart there is not an iota of hatred towards us.[336]

As one may notice, in this narration the issue of hostility towards the truth and its upholders is discussed. It must be

[334] Kulayni, *Uṣūl al-kafī*, vol. II, p. 404.
[335] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Ma'ānī al-Akhbār*, p. 200.
[336] *Kitāb al-khiṣāl*, vol. II, pp. 407–408.

mentioned, however, that eternal life in hell is not limited to those who are hostile to the progeny of the Prophet (the *Ahl al-Bayt*), or to the arrogant people (*mustakbarīn*) and those rebellious elements among non-Shī'ites and even infidels who, out of their ignorance and failure to see the truth, turn against God and His friends.

According to Sulaym ibn Qays Halāli,[337] in a discourse about the 73 communities, the Commander of the Faithful (Imām 'Ali) identifies one community as saved and the other 72 as God's enemies and the enemies of the Prophet and his household. The 72 communities are independent-minded and think that they know better. They have rebelled consciously, and therefore they are lost. By the command of Shayṭān these people have turned their backs on the Prophet and have become infidels. They worship everything other than God unknowingly and think that they are right. On the Day of Resurrection they will claim faith, but they lie.

At this point Sulaym says that he asked Imām 'Ali about those people who are "neither your friends and followers nor you enemies, and their state on the Day of Resurrection."

'Ali responded: Those people are distinct from the 72 communities. They are those who believe in God and His Messenger but do not acknowledge our legitimacy and status. They are not aware that our enemies strayed and are lost. They have neither introduced any distortion or innovation in their religion, nor have they misled others. Anything about which they did not possess knowledge, they left it to God. These people can be saved. They form the majority among the believers. They will be present on the Day of Judgment. They will be saved from the fire of hell by the grace of the

[337] Sulaym ibn Qays was born in Kufa around 620 and came to Medina but was not able to see the Prophet. He became a close companion to five Shī'ites of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. His death is recorded in the year 76h. *The Book of Sulaym ibn Qays* is the earliest source on Shī'a *ḥadīth* and according to many reports it received the endorsement of all of them. It contains an invaluable source of knowledge of the Tradition, theology, and history of the early Islamic community.

intercession of the Prophet, the angels, and believers. The believers will enter paradise without being questioned as the 72 groups will enter hell without being questioned. It is in accordance with this logical principle that God, Exalted and Majestic is He, has ordained eternal life in hell, not just to unbelievers but also for those who deny the signs of God's power:

> *As for the unbelievers who cry lies to Our signs, those shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.*[338]

or,

> *Those that cry lies to Our signs and wax proud against them the gates of heaven shall not be opened to them, nor shall they enter Paradise until the camel passes through the eye of the needle. Even so We recompense the sinners;*[339]

> *Those who cry lies to Our signs, and the encounter in the world to come—their works have failed; shall they be recompensed, except according to the things they have done?*[340]

and,

> *And those who cry lies to Our signs We will draw them on little by little whence they know not;*[341]

Before we discuss the fifth point, it is necessary to allude briefly to another group. In addition to the groups discussed, that is, the righteous believers, evildoing infidels, the downtrodden, and those believers who do good and evil deeds together, the Qur'an introduces another group whose affairs will not be judged immediately after death. Rather, they will be deferred till the Day of Resurrection, that is the day that the

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[338] Qur'an 2: 39.
[339] Qur'an 7: 40.
[340] Qur'an 7: 147.
[341] Qur'an 7: 182.

nature of their souls will be revealed. God either will have mercy on them or will punish them as He wills in accordance with the state of their souls. Those people are referred to as "Those who are deferred to God's command (*murjaūna li amri'llah*)."[342] *"And others are deferred to God's commandment, whether He chastises them, or turns towards them; God is All-knowing, All-wise.*[343]

Concerning this verse, Imām Bāqir said, "Those who are deferred to God's command (*murjaūna li amri'llah*) are people who were infidels before and killed many believers like Ḥamza[344] and Ja'far.[345] Then they entered Islam and accepted One God but faith did not enter their hearts and they did not become like believers to deserve paradise. On the hand, they were no longer infidels to deserve hell. They will remain in that state until God decides to punish them or forgive them.[346]

In some narrations this group is said to be the same as downtrodden (*mustaḍ'āfīn*). When people asked Imām Ṣādiq about the downtrodden, he said,

> They are the people of *wilāyah*. However, this does not denote deep spiritual attachment to the truth and essence of religion, but observing exoteric aspects and commands of Islam such as the rule for marriage, inheritance, association with other Muslims, and the like. In reality, these people are neither believers nor infidels. They are those whose affairs are deferred to God (*marja'ūn li-amri'llah*).[347]

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[342] The term *murjaūn* literary means those who postpone or delay an action. The term refers to a group of people who are believers although their faith is not strong. They may commit sins and good deeds at the same time. So their ultimate destiny is not known, and it is upon God to decide to forgive them or punish them. The action, however, leaves the possibility of divine mercy open as the word originates from *raja'*, which means hope. *"And others are deferred to God's commandment, whether He chastises them, or turns towards them; God is All-knowing, All-wise."* Qur'an 9: 106.

[343] Qur'an 9: 106.

[344] Ḥamza, the Prophet's uncle.

[345] Ja'far Ṭayyār was the step-brother of 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib.

[346] Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kafi*, vol. II, p. 407.

[347] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Ma'ānī al-Akhbār*, p. 104.

Another conclusion that can be made from the above-mentioned verse is that while there is hope for forgiveness and salvation for the people discussed, they will never attain the stations that are attainable by believers, people of good deeds (*akhyār*), the righteous, the pious believers (*abrār*), the Sincere (*mukhlaṣīn*), the Martyrs (*shuhadā*), and Friends of God (*awliyā'*). There are hierarchies in paradise and each level is set aside for a special group of believers. As Imām Ṣādiq said,

> These are the people who lack power to fight against plots and conspiracies, nor have they ever been guided to the path of God. God will treat them in accordance with their actions. They will be allowed to enter paradise if they did good deeds and avoided that which God proclaimed illegal (*ḥarām*). However, they will never reach the station of pious believers.

The following verses also address the downtrodden and the necessity of migration in the face of injustice and infidelity, and the rewards for the person who undertakes such a journey.

> *Whoso emigrates in the way of God will find in the earth many refuges and plenty; whoso goes forth from his house an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage shall have fallen on God; surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.*[348]

The inward meaning of the above verse also denotes that since the intermediate world is the continuation of this world, it possesses forms, quantity, and quality. Therefore, those believers who leave the abode of their carnal soul, and show steadfastness and migrate [from their own selves], but do not reach perfection and do not understand the reality of *wilāyah,* and are not annihilated from God in this world, will reach perfection in the intermediate world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will rise in their perfect station. This is a valid argument and sound conclusion in accordance with injunctions of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet, for migration also

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[348] Qur'an 4: 100.

has its own hierarchies according to the intention of the traveler, as the Prophet explained: "He who intends to migrate for the sake of God and His Messenger, his journey will be towards God and His Messenger. And he who intends to migrate for the sake of a woman or a treasure, will journey towards them."

In accordance with this rule, that is, the attainment of perfection by imperfect souls in the intermediate world, there are some narrations according to which children of believers who die young will be raised by the Prophet Abraham and Her Holiness Faṭimah in the intermediate world, as it is stated in the story of [the Prophet's] nocturnal journey (*mi'rāj*).

> It is said that when the Prophet went on his nocturnal journey, he came across an old man who was sitting under a tree and around him were several children. The Prophet asked Jibra'īl who this man and children were. Jibra'īl told him, "This is your father, Abraham and those children belong to believers and Abraham feeds them."[349]

Imām Ṣādiq also said that the children of our followers [Shī'ites] will be raised by Faṭimah, may God's peace be upon her.[350]

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[349] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. VI, p. 229.

[350] Ibid.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Seventeenth Discourse

The Relationship between the Intermediate World and the World of Nature

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Say: "Work; and God will surely see your work, and His Messenger, and the believers, and you will be returned to Him who knows the unseen and the visible, and He will tell you what you were doing."*[351]

Our discourse today is about the relationship between beings of the world of Dominion (*malakūt*) and those of the world of the Kingdom (*mulk*) and the ways in which they interact and influence one another. We shall also discuss the relationship between beings of the highest realm of the world of Dominion (*malakūt-e a'lā*)—that is, the realm of Divine Names and Attributes—and beings of the lowest realm of the world of the Kingdom (*malakūt-e asfal*), which is the abode of forms, and their impact on one another. Finally, we will discuss the relationship between the archetypal beings of the world of the Kingdom (*mulk*) and the celestial world (*nāsūt*), which is the abode of matter and nature. This is a very sensitive and subtle discussion because it sheds light on the nature of the relationship between the human soul and those of the intermediate and archetypal worlds as well as life after death in the grave. There are several questions that we shall address and attempt to provide convincing answers to.

First Question: Does the human body experience torment and suffering in the grave? Every creature in the world of the Kingdom (*mulk*) and Witnessing (*'ālam-al-shahādah*),

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[351] Qur'an 9: 105.

including human beings, even the smallest and least significant one, has a protecting angel that nurtures it. In other words, the entire world of Witnessing is under the governance of the world of Dominion (*malakūt*), which is the realm of meaning and truth. The power of that world is much more than that of our world. It governs over our world and controls all these creatures and nurtures them through its agents. These agents are called angels. There are as many angels as the number of all existing things in this world. Every particle of dust and every drop of rain has its own protecting angel.

Every seed and plant and everything else in the universe has its own protecting angel appointed by God to the task whose duty is to protect that being. Angels are of various types in accordance with their God-given talents and qualities and have different missions and tasks to perform. Some are angels of mercy, while some others are angels of wrath and hardship (*naqmat*). As a tornado is different from a morning breeze, their angels also are different from one another.

In the human domain, also every human limb and faculty, such as the sense of touch, the digestive system, and the faculties of attraction and repulsion, is under the governance of its angel. This is a philosophical reality that [explains the hierarchical order of the universe] in the sense that all beings of the world of matter are under the governance of the beings of the world of archetypes, who in turn are under the governance of the beings of the world of spirit and the highest realm of the world of Dominion (*malakūt-e a'lā*)), all the way to the world of Divine Names and Attributes, and finally to the world of the Supreme Divine Name (Allāh) that is the abode of Divine Unicity (*aḥadīyah*) that has no name and no sign (*maqam lā isma lahū wa lā rasma lahū*), Majestic and Glorious is He. The light of existence, therefore, emanates first from the Divine Essence and descends upon the world of Divine Names and Attributes gradually in different hierarchical planes of existence. It manifests itself in the disentangled beings of the archetypal world and then in the world of matter and nature.

In contrast to materialist philosophers who believe in the principiality of matter (*aṣālat-e maddah*) and consider spirit to be an insignificant reflection of matter, divinely inspired philosophers believe in the Divine Reality and His Unity, for God is an infinite, non-compound, and simple (*basīṭ*) being and possesses infinite life, power, and knowledge. He is Independent and Sufficient unto Himself (*Ṣamad*) in His being. All other disentangled, spiritual, or material beings originate from Him by virtue of His creative will, not through birth (*khuruj* or *sudur*).

This statement does not negate Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī's view that the origin of the soul is corporeal and its final end and subsistence is spiritual (*al-nafs jismānīyah al-ḥudūth ruḥanīyah al-baqā'*). His conclusion is based on [his theory] of substantial motion (*ḥarakat al-jawharīyah*) that is supported by Qur'anic verses and other narrations.[352]

According to this view the substance of every material being is in a constant state of motion by virtue of its inherent quality and after many transformations becomes disentangled. Mullā Ṣadrā proved that the soul by virtue of its original creation needs a corporeal frame and finds actualization within the body. Man is a being who finds existence gradually and whose beginning is matter and whose end is intellect. The human soul starts with a single drop and after going through stages it acquires faculties of sense, imagination (*khayāl*), estimation (*wahm*), and finally intellection (*ta'aqqul*). Then it becomes disentangled. It stays with the body for a period of time, and then becomes sufficient unto itself and continues to live in a state of disentanglement. This is the opposite view of that of Avicenna and early philosophers who regarded the soul to be eternal and the body as a frame for its corporeal existentiation.

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[352] Qur'an 23: 12–14. "*We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop, in a receptacle secure, then We created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in flesh; thereafter We produced him as another creature. So blessed be God, the fairest of creators!*"

Mullā Ṣadrā also believed that the world of Dominion (*malakūt*) governs over the world of the Kingdom (*mulk*) in the sense that all stages of perfection of creation of man from the point of view of existence, knowledge, power, his disentanglement, and his spirit, are under the governance of the realm above. In other words, descending from the world of spirit to the darkest world of matter and then ascending to the world of spirit[353] requires that divine light descend from the world of Divine Names and Attributes to the realm of disentangled heavenly beings, down to the archetypal world and then to the world of form and matter, and then gradually ascend to the divine realm, Majestic and Glorious is He. This process will not take place unless the very same prime matter/*hayūla/hyle* that is the potential human being finds actualization as a result of the governance of the world of Dominion (*malakūt*).

Some [modern] scholars have tried to interpret Qur'anic verses and narrations [of the Imāms] that deal with these processes and the role of angels according to the laws of physics and chemistry. They argue that since science had not developed at the time of the revelation [of Islam], angels and *jinn* were believed to be the cause of the creation of natural phenomena. This is a false conclusion. Of course, we do not deny the role of the laws of nature in the creation of every phenomenon. However, those laws are subject to and under the governance of spiritual and supernatural forces. In addition to the fact that in many of our [Shī'i] narrations such as the third discourse in the *Ṣaḥīfah Sajjādīyah*[354] the types of angels that are in charge of natural disasters are mentioned, spiritual and pure men of God in this world are in contact with the world of spirit, and angels are attracted to them and love them as well. Angels like the

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[353] Qur'an 2: 156. *"inna li'lLah wa inna ilyhi raj 'ūn."*

[354] Known as the Psalm of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*Zabūr-i Āl-i Muhammad*) *Ṣaḥīfah Sajjādīyah* is a book of supplication composed by the fourth Shī'a Imām, Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn Sajjād. The beauty of its style, its eloquence, and its penetrating spiritual messages have earned extensive recognition for the book throughout the Islamic world. An English translation of that is also available. See William Chittick, *The Perfect Book of Imam Zaynul-A'abideen A'li Ibnul-Ḥusayn as-Sajjad*, London: Muhammad Trust, 2006.

clean and purified houses of prophets and saintly men and descend into those places; they also like the pure hearts of Friends of God and descend into their hearts. Although angels are detached beings, they are able to establish a special kind of relationship with our world.

In the Qur'an God swears in the name of angels that are assigned different tasks. For example,

> *By those that pluck out vehemently and those that draw out violently, by those that swim serenely and those that outstrip suddenly by those that direct an affair!* [355]

and,

> *They say: "The All-merciful has taken to Him a son." Glory be to Him! Nay, but they are honoured servants that outstrip Him not in speech, and perform as He commands.* [356]

Philosophical Explanation: Philosophers have accepted the principle that from the One nothing issues except one (*al-waḥdu lā yadaru minhu illā al-wāḥid*). They believe that the light of existence and unity manifested Itself in the world of multiplicity through ten intellects (*'uqūl-i 'asharah*).

Of course, we do not have any convincing reasons based on the intellect to prove what was believed about the ten intellects (*'uqūl-i 'asharah*). We just accept it as a hypothesis. It is for this reason that some philosophers like those of the School of Illumination presented another hypothesis. They used the Platonic archetypes (*muthul-e Aflatoonī*) to explain how multiple things that share some inherent characteristics are governed over in this world. According to this approach all material beings that find corporeal existence have a disentangled spiritual being that is their archetype and governs over them and their affairs. For example, for human beings who share the same physical form and have common characteristics, there is a disentangled luminous being that possesses the

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[355] Qur'an 79: 105.
[356] Qur'an 21: 26–27.

universal rational faculty and governs over them, and all characteristics of man *qua* man (*insān bi mā huwa insān*) emanate from it. Similarly, all other things—from plants to animals and natural phenomenon such as winds and waves in the oceans—all have one single luminous archetype called goddess/*Rabb al-nu'* that governs over them. Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī explained this philosophical reality in a poem:

> For us the Platonic archetype of every species
> Is the intellect of that species,
> free from its corporeality and its implications
> all perfections that any species possesses
> are present in that pure intellect
> in the most perfect way.[357]

Explanation through *Ḥadīth* and Narrations: The archetypes have been explained in some traditions and [Shī'i] narrations using such terms as light, intellect, angels, and the Word, as it has been said: "*The first thing God created was the light.*" and "*The first thing God created was the intellect.*"

Imām 'Ali once stated that people asked the Prophet about the reality of the intellect as God created it, and the Prophet replied,

> God created an angel who had as many heads as the number of men who have been and will be created until the Day of Judgment. Then God created a face for every head of that angel. He also gave man one of the heads and placed his name on it. Then he covered every face of that angel with a veil. That veil will not be removed until the day when a man is born and reaches the adult age. At that time a light will descend upon the human heart whereby he/she will understand his/her obligatory duties and the tradition of the Prophet and can differentiate between good and evil. The example of this intellect in the heart is like that of a lamp in the middle of a house.

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[357] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, Nāṣerī edition, pp. 193–194.

The correspondence of this *hadīth* to Platonic archetypes, as described, is quite clear. In the third supplication of the *Ṣaḥīfah Sajjādīyah* [which is a supplication that blesses the Bearers of the Throne and every angel brought nigh], we read,

> O God! As for the bearers of Thy Throne, who
> never flag in glorifying Thee,
> never become wary of calling Thee holy
> never tire of worshiping Thee
> never prefer curtailment over diligence in Thy command,
> and are never heedless of passionate love for Thee...[358]

In one of the most famous [Shī'i] prayers called the *Simāt*, also known as *shabbūr*, that is attributed to Imām Ṣādiq, he addresses God by such names as the Greatest, the Supreme, the Generous, and the Majestic, names that when called will open the gates of heaven, will give life to the dead, and will ease all hardships. The prayer ends with the following statement: "O God! By the reality of this prayer, and these Names whose inward and outward (*tafsīrahā wa ta'wīlaha wa zāhirahā wa bāṭinaha*) meanings no one knows but You...."[359]

Obviously, these names whose meanings are known to God alone refer to those disentangled created realities of God. The question is what are the names whose meanings are not known to anyone except God?

Once someone asked Imām 'Ali about beings of the disentangled world and higher realms of existence. He presented the following description:

> They are beings whose form is without matter and their perfection is beyond [ordinary] talents and capabilities. God disclosed Himself to them and they shined and were illuminated. He placed in them of His own substance and manifested His acts through them.

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[358] Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn, *Ṣāḥīfah Sajjādīyah*, (*The Psalms of Islam*), translated into English by William C. Chittick, London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1988, p. 23.

[359] As quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 90, p. 100.

> God created the human being with a rational faculty. If one were to purify that faculty and place it on the two wings of knowledge and action and nurture that, it would resemble its original substance. If man follows moderation, avoids contradictory qualities, and is just, he will share the power of seven heavens.[360]

It is reported that an Arab man asked Imām 'Ali about the nature of the soul (*nafs*). 'Ali described four different types of souls. They are the plant soul (*nāmiyah nabātīyah*), the animal soul (*ḥissīyah ḥaywaynīyah*), the rational sacred soul (*nafs nāṭiqah Qudsīyah*), and the universal divine soul (*ilāhīyah kulīyah malakūtīyah*). He explained the qualities of each soul. The man then asked him about the universal divine soul (*ilāhīyah kulīyah malakūtīyah*). 'Ali replied,

> It is a faculty that belongs to the realm of Divine Names and Qualities (*lāhūtīyah*), its substance is simple, and it is alive unto itself. It originates from the intellect (*'aql*) by which it starts, and towards which it guides, and to which it will return when it attains perfection, and from which all existing things come into being and through which they reach perfection. The intellect possesses an exalted station. It is the Lot Tree (*shajaratun ṭūbā' wa sidrat al-muntahā'*) and the Garden of Abode (*jannat-ul ma'wā*). He who knows it will never be wretched and he who does not know it will be ignorant and lost.

Again the Arab man asked, "What is the intellect?"

'Ali answered,

> It is a substance that perceives all things in every respect. It is aware of things before they are created. It is the cause of

[360] Jamāl al-Dīn Khwansārī, *Commentary on Ghurar wa Durar*, vol. iv, pp. 218–220. See also Ibn Shahrashūb, *Manāqib*, Lithograph edition, vol. I, p. 272.

[the existence] of all existing things and it is the ultimate end of all things.[361]

In a supplication that Imām Ṣādiq composed to recite when one visits the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn, he used terms and phrases that correspond to our discussion. It reads as follows:

> It is by your grace that the earth grows its trees, trees bear fruits, and clouds pour their rain. The earth that is under your feet remains stable and the mountains are fixed in their locations. God's Will descends upon you and His command is ordained through you and issues from your home and from it issues the commands for God's servants.

It is evident from this description that what is meant is the attributes and the station of the spirit of the Imām and the ways in which it affects the endangered things in the world, and is the channel of emanation of God's grace. We must note that there are numerous narrations that demonstrate the influence of disentangled beings and sacred souls upon our world. What we have mentioned are a just a few examples.

In numerous verses of the Qur'an God introduces the angels as the vessels of emanation of His grace and emphasizes their function in the affairs of this world, from natural disasters to the daily life of believers in this world and after death. God gave them these missions until the end of time and there is no alteration in God's command and His Straight path as we read in the Book. For example,

> *Praise belongs to God, Creator of the heavens and earth, who appointed the angels to be messengers having wings two, three and four, increasing creation as He wills.*[362]

and,

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[361] As quoted in Ḥajj Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ-e du'a-ye Miṣbāḥ*, lithograph edition, pp. 45–46; and Fayḍ Kashanī, *Kalamāt-e maknūnah*, lithograph edition, p. 73, discourse 34.
[362] Qur'an 35: 1.

And thou shalt never find any changing the Wont of God, and thou shalt never find any altering the wont of God.[363]

and,

Surely my Lord is on a straight path.

We might also add that angels do not possess independence in their actions and are mere agents of God. The angel who is brought nigh to God receives his order from God and transmits that to his subordinate angel, who in turn transmits it to other angels in the hierarchical order of their ranks until the command reaches those angels who are in charge of the affairs of this world. Ultimately, all power, knowledge, and commands belong to God. The fact that He delegates His authority to angels does not negate this principle. "*Glorified is He who is High Exalted, above what the oppressors say.*"[364] "*There is no power nor strength save in God, Exalted and Majestic is He.*"

The human soul does not totally detach itself from the body that is its frame and to which it belongs. This is similar to the state of man's soul when he is asleep except that the detachment in sleep is much less profound than that in death. Therefore, the soul follows man to his grave when he dies. That is the reason that the shrines of Imāms and saints are believed to be the source of emanation of grace and blessings. One must bear in mind, however, that all greetings and benedictions are addressed to their archetypal souls in the intermediate world and not to their bodies in graves. For this reason when a person dies his body must be treated with utmost respect and dignity because, [in a sense] the soul accompanies it to the grave. There are many narrations attributed to the Imām regarding this issue. Imām Ṣādiq narrated a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet who said, "The torment of the grave is the expiations (*kaffārah*) that a believer pays for God's bounties that a believer wasted in the world."

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[363] Qur'an 35: 43.

[364] Qur'an 17: 43. See also 7: 206 and 21: 19–20.

The status and substance of the soul are very different from those of the body. Events such as death by burning, hanging, and dismemberment of the body that many saints and Friends of God became victims of do not affect the rewards of the victim before God. Rather, because of the intervention of the archetypal body of the deceased, his soul may actually attain a higher station and reach the rank of a martyr on the path of the truth. It is believed that the bodies of such individuals do not disintegrate and decompose. Many eye-witness accounts of such cases exist in the history of Islam.[365]

It is reported that after Shah Ismā'il Safavi (892–930/1487–1524) conquered Baghdad, he went to Karbalā to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Imām Ḥusayn. He then walked to the tomb of Hurr ibn Yazid Riyāḥī[366] who had been martyred in Karbalā in 81/680 and ordered excavation of that spot. When they dug the grave of Hurr, they found his body intact and in the same state in which he had been martyred in Karbalā some 900 years earlier. Science cannot explain these incidents, but those who believe in the unseen world and the realm of spirit do believe in these as the Qur'an describes.[367]

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[365] One recently discovered example was the body of Shaykh Ṣadūq ibn Bābūyah that was found intact 857 years after his death. For the details of this account see *Rawḍāt al-jannāt* and *Tanqih al-maqal.*

[366] The son of Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah, the second caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty. Hurr joined Imām Husain when he rose against Yazīd and was martyred on the tenth day of Muharram 81/680 in Karbalā.

[367] Qur'an 2: 3, *"Those who believe in the unseen..."* For a detailed report of this incident see *Tanqiḥ al-maqāl*, Lithograph edition, vol. I, pp. 260–261.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Eighteenth Discourse

The Relationship between the Spirit and the World

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Say: "Work; and God will surely see your work, and His Messenger, and the believers, and you will be returned to Him who knows the unseen and the visible, and He will tell you what you were doing."*[368]

As we stated in the previous discourses, after death the soul appears in its archetypal form. The souls of unbelievers appear in the form of devils and in accordance with the animalistic traits that they possess. In contrast, believers and people of faith appear in their human form as in the world.

Abī Wallād Ḥannat[369] once asked Imām Ṣādiq whether or not it is true that the souls of believers appear in the bellies of green birds that fly around the Throne (*'arsh*). Imām Ṣādiq replied, "No, that is not true. A believer and person of faith is much more noble before God than for Him to place his soul in the belly of birds. He appears in heaven in the same bodily form in which he lived in the world."[370]

Imām Ṣādiq also said,

> Indeed the spirits [of believers] appear in human form in heaven, stand next to a tree, and recognize each other and converse with one another. When a new spirit enters them they will exempt him from conversation and questions, for he has just been freed from a scary situation. Then they will ask the new spirit what did such-and-such a person do? If it says he is still alive, they will still have hope for that person's salvation. And if the new spirit says such-and-such

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[368] Qur'an 9: 105.

[369] One of the disciples of Imām Ṣādiq and a narrator of *Ḥadīth*.

[370] As quoted in *Furu' al-kāfī*, lithograph edition, vol. I, p. 67.

> person is dead, other spirits will say that he is, in fact, ruined and is in hell. Otherwise, he would have been with them in paradise.[371]

Abū Baṣīr said that once he asked Imām Ṣādiq about the spirits of believers. He replied, "They will be in their apartments in heaven, eating heavenly food and drinking heavenly wine and saying, "O Lord! Bring us the Day of Judgment and fulfill that which You promised us, and connect our first descendent to our last."[372]

The above narrations are just presented by way of typification to show that believers will appear in human form in the intermediate world. Other narrations indicate that spirits of believers descend on earth and visit their families and relatives and learn about their condition. The connection between the spirit and this world is so strong that a good deed in this world affects the soul in the other world.

It is narrated that one day Jesus Christ passed through a cemetery. It was revealed to him that in one of the graves a man was being tormented. After a year he passed through the same cemetery again and did not notice such a thing. When he wondered about the reason, God revealed to him that the man who was being tortured [last year] had a virtuous and pious son who constantly prayed for his father: "I forgave him for the sake of his son's good deed."

A *ḥadīth* whose authenticity is acknowledged by the Shī'ites and Sunnis alike states: "He who establishes and leaves behind a good tradition (practice), he will have the rewards of all those who act upon that tradition after his death. And he who leaves an evil tradition behind will receive the punishment of all who act upon that tradition."

It is also narrated that Imām Ṣādiq said,

> The [spirit of a] believer visits his family and sees what he loves about them but what he dislikes will be hidden from him. The [spirit of] a non-believer also visits his family and

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[371] Ibid.

[372] Ibid.

relatives but sees only that which he dislikes in them, and things he likes will be hidden from him.

The narrator said that he asked the Imām if the spirit becomes aware when one visits its grave. The Imām replied, "Yes, indeed they become aware and get fearful when one leaves their grave site."[373]

Visiting the tombs of the deceased, especially those of scholars, martyrs, and those who are brought nigh to God, is very efficacious. Making a pilgrimage to the shrines of Imāms has a purifying effect in the sense that it cleanses the soul of all impurities. Since such visits result in a kind of connection with the spirit of the deceased, and the visitor will appeal for help and intercession from it, the purer the spirit of the deceased, the more efficacious the visit will be for the pilgrims. Through such pilgrimages a believer gets connected to the world of spirit and benefits from it immensely. In places where pious people and Friends of God are buried there is much grace, and prayers are answered in such locations.

The late Ayatullah Ḥajj Shaykh Muhammad Javād Anṣārī of Ḥamadān,[374] who was a most distinguished Gnostic, once narrated a story that is interesting to hear. He said,

> In the past I never visited the tomb of anyone other than the Imāms because I did not believe there is any grace in such visits. Then one day, I went to the tower of Kasrā (Ṭāq-i Kasra) in Ctesiphon[375] and after performing two courses of

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[373] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. VI, p. 256.

[374] Ḥajj Shaykh Muhammad Javād Anṣārī Ḥamadāni (1281–1339/1865–1921) was a well-known contemporary jurist and Gnostic from Ḥamadān.

[375] The Tower of Kasrā (Ayvan-i Kasrā) is located in Ctesiphon, the ancient capital city of the Sassanid Empire. It was one of the first major urban centers of Persia conquered by the Arab invasion in 637. It is the largest and tallest brick tower ever built in the ancient times. It is now located near the town of Salmān Pak in Iraq. See Jens Kroger, "Ctesiphon," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. VI, Costa Mesa-CA, 1993. See also Ahmad Shahvary, *History of Iran from the Beginning to the End of Sassanid: New Look to the History of Iran*, vol. I (in Persian) CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2005.

> prayer, I walked towards the tomb of Salmān [Fārsī] and joined my friends. Suddenly, Salmān appeared to us and began to serve us. His physical form manifested the reality of his substance. He spirit was so pure and transparent that it filled the air with love and joy, and we were overwhelmed with love. The environment created around us by his presence was subtle and vast, pure like water and luminous like the soul of the Knower of God (*'ārif bi'llah*) just like the environment of paradise. I felt ashamed that I did not go to his tomb first. Since then, in addition to making pilgrimage to the shrines of the Imāms, I always visit the tombs of divine scholars, Friends of God, and those who are close to Him, as well as the graves of ordinary believers. I have also recommended that my students to do the same so that they will not be deprived of God's grace.

It is recorded in numerous narrations [of the Imāms] that the spirits of believers in heaven congregate in the abode of Peace (Wādī al-Salām) and angels address them, saying to them, "...*'Enter the gates of Paradise, to dwell therein forever.'*"[376] The symbol of Wādī al-Salām on this earth is a region in the noble land of Najaf that is the realm of *wilāyah*. It is located just behind the city of Kufa. Before the blessed body of Imām 'Ali was buried there, the Najaf region was an arid land and there was no town or city there. The city of Najaf was built around the shrine of Imām 'Ali and gradually expanded.

Aḥmad ibn 'Umar recalls a conversation he once had with Imām Ṣādiq regarding Wādī al-Salām . He said, "I told him that I have a brother who lives in Baghdad and am afraid he may die there."

Imām Ṣādiq said, "Do not worry where he might die, for God brings the spirit of a believer to Wādī al-Salām to congregate with other believers whether he dies in the East or West.

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[376] Qur'an 39: 73.

I asked where Wādī al-Salām was, and he replied, "Behind the city of Kufa. Beware! I see the gatherings of believers where they are sitting in circles and conversing."[377]

Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭah narrates that one day Amīr al-Mu'minīn (Imām 'Ali) left Kufa and we followed him. When we reached him we found him lying down on the ground. Qanbar[378] asked him if he could spread his robe on the ground so that 'Ali could lie down on it. 'Ali refused and said,

> ...this place is the dust of believers, we are not to disturb them in their own house. O son of Nabāṭah, if the veils are removed before your eyes you will see that believers are gathered here in circles and talk to each other. Behind the spirit of each believer there is the spirit of an infidel in the dry and hostile land of the desert (*barahūt*).[379]

Believers who congregate in the Abode of Peace (Wādī al-Salām) live in happiness and joy. They are immersed in love and intoxicated by the wine of *wilāyah*. They do not notice the passage of time in the intermediate world (*barzakh*). In contrast, unbelievers and infidels who are deprived of knowledge and who have never tasted the pure water of *wilāyah* reside in the dry land of Barahūt in Yemen.

The passing of time is long and difficult for the people of Barahūt. Each moment seems like years to them. In contrast, for the people of the Abode of Peace (Wādī al-Salām) time goes by in such a fine and subtle way as though each year is a moment. Indeed, in the intimate moment with the Beloved one does not notice the passage of time. In the station of union with the Beloved where spirits are cleansed from all impurities and multiplicities, the lover and the Beloved become one, as when sugar is dissolved in milk. The passing of time and perceiving

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[377] Kulaynī, *Furu' al-kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 67.

[378] Qanbar is the servant of Imām 'Ali.

[379] Barahūt, also known as Belhūt, is a hot and dry region in Haḍarmawt where there exists a well at the foot of a volcanic mountain range. Legend has it that evil spirits reside in this mountain. In daily discourse the term is used to denote a hostile, very dry, and very hot desert.

of its gradual nature, which is an attribute of the world of matter, has no place in that station. This is how Friends of God (*awliyā' Allah*) perceive time and its passing.

In contrast, when one is confined in the prison of separation from the Beloved, each moment goes by like a year. Preoccupation with multiplicities and illusions created by them causes the time to feel longer that what it actually is. Every moment feels like the long night of the winter for such a person.

There are those individual men of visionary insight who are nigh to God, and the eye of their heart is open. They can see the dead and converse with them just like the dead who can see the living and converse with them. It is narrated on the authority of the Seventh Imām, Musā ibn Ja'far, who said:

> We left Medina with my father to visit some property he had outside the city. When we came to the desert an old man with gray hair came to us and greeted my father. My father dismounted [the horse] and went to him. I heard my father greet him with love and respect. We sat down and they talked for a long time. Then the old man said farewell to my father and left. My father stood there for a while and saw him off. I asked my father who this man was that he spoke to him with such love and respect. He replied that the man was "my father."[380]

In short, human beings must never lose their faith, and they must live in such a way as not to be in trouble in the intermediate world. A man of faith must always strive for virtuous deeds and seek proximity to God so that his spirit will be safe and serene in the Abode of Peace. On the Day of Judgment such a soul can go to paradise and remain there forever. Otherwise, he will be tormented in the intermediate world, for there is no possibility of intercession there.

'Amr ibn Yazīd narrates that one day,

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[380] al-Hillī, Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, lithograph edition, pp. 79–80.

I heard Imām Ṣādiq saying, "Indeed our followers (*Shi'iatanā*) will be in paradise regardless of their deeds." I asked him, "How is this possible, as many of us have committed many sins?" The Imām answered,

"By God, I said the truth. All of them will be in paradise on the Day of Judgment because of the intercession of the Prophet or his legatee (i.e. 'Ali). I am, however, concerned about your state in the intermediate world."

I asked what and where the intermediate world is and he replied,

"It is where you go and stay from the moment of death till the Day of Judgment."[381]

When man leaves this world his presence ends in this world except people who leave behind righteous children or wealth that is spent to support charities or religious and scholarly activities that benefit society, as the Qur'an says. The reality of man's existence, which is the essence of his good and righteous deeds or evil actions, will survive with his spirit and can be a source of comfort and joy for him or a cause of torment and pain. If the man was righteous in this world and did good deeds, his soul will be in a state of felicity eternally, but if he was evil and forgetful of God, God will command his deeds to torment him like a devil:

Whoso blinds himself to the Remembrance of the All-Merciful, to him We assign a Satan for a comrade; and they bar them from the way, and they think they are guided, till, when he comes to Us, he says, "Would there had been between me and thee the distance of the two Easts!"[382]

This Satan is in fact the manifestation of man's carnal soul that made him obey Satan in the world. Man could not see in the

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[381] Kulayni, *Furu' al-kafi*, vol. I, p. 66.
[382] Qur'an 43: 36–38.

world because of all the veils that covered his soul. In the intermediate world where all veils are removed, he can see that Satan and wishes to get away from it; whereas if the man was righteous in the world, his deeds will appear to him in the form of beautiful human beings, in nice dress, with perfumes, and the like. Indeed, *"Prosperous is he who purifies it, and failed has he who seduces it."*[383]

In *Nahj al-balāghah*, Imām 'Ali frequently warns us about death and the necessity of piety and belief in Divine Unity and the Day of Return (*Ma'ād*). According to him, God has assigned two messengers to guide man. One is the intellect (*'aql*) that is his inner messenger that always accompanies man. The other is man's outer messenger that urges him to listen to his intellect. If man chooses not to follow the path of the truth, does not follow the command of his outer messenger, and ignores the guidance of his inner messenger, he is responsible for his loss, as the Qur'an says: *"Taste the chastisement of the burning—that, for what your hands have forwarded, and for that God is never unjust unto His servants."*[384]

A small particle cannot be seen with the naked eye, and one needs a microscope to see it. In this world, only the outwardly visible deeds of man can be seen. The reality of his deeds, which is his intention, is subtle and is hidden from people. In the Hereafter, where the inner reality of things can be seen, man hates his evil deeds that he committed in the world and tries to get away from them, while his good deeds are so pleasing and joyful that he will become overwhelmed. Man cannot imagine how pleasing and splendid the reality of his good deeds can be in the Hereafter. When he sees his deeds in their heavenly form he will ask them what they are, and they will respond, "I am the daily prayer that you performed, I am the pilgrimage that you made to Mecca (*Ḥajj*), I am the alms you paid," and the like.

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383 Qur'an 91: 9–10.

384 Qur'an 3: 81 and 8: 51.

Abū Baṣīr narrates on the authority of one of the sincere friends of God (*Ṣādiqīn*),[385] who said,

> When a man of faith dies, six beings accompany him to his grave. One of them has the most beautiful form and charming face, and pristine appearance. That being asks the other ones who they are. The one on the right hand will introduce itself as daily prayer, the one on the left as alms, a third one identifying itself as fasting, the fourth as pilgrimage to Mecca. And finally the last one will introduce itself as good deeds that the man did to his brothers. Then these beings will turn to the first one, who is the most beautiful of all, and ask it to identify itself. He replies, I am the *wilāyah* of the progeny (*Ahl al-Bayt*) of the Prophet.[386]

May God guide us so that we seek the *wilāyah* of the Prophet and his progeny. It is the rope that connects man to God, and if man clings to it, he will be saved from the depth of the terrestrial world (*nāsūt*) to the high wings on the realm of Divine Names (*lāhūt*). Otherwise, he will be captured by the rebellious carnal soul, and Satan will lead him to darkness and loss.

It is said that Islam is based on five pillars that include daily prayer, fasting, payment of alms, making pilgrimage to Mecca

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[385] There are numerous references to the term *Ṣādiqīn* in the Qur'an defined as those who believe and struggle on the path of God, are generous to the poor, and spend their wealth. See for instance, "*The believers are those who believe in God and His Messenger, then have not doubted, and have struggled with their possessions and their selves in the way of God; those—they are the truthful ones*" (49: 15). "*O believers, fear God, and be with the truthful ones*" 9: 119; and, "*It is for the poor emigrants, who were expelled from their habitations and their possessions, seeking bounty from God and good pleasure, and helping God and His Messenger; those—they are the truthful ones*" (59: 8). Shī'ite commentators believe that this term has a universal and a particular application. It addresses all those believers who are sincere in faith and observe what God commands. A particular meaning of the term applies to the Infallible Imāms.

[386] Marfu' Barqī, *Maḥāsin*, vol. I, p. 288.

(*Hajj*), and *wilāyah*.[387] Indeed, *wilāyah* is the spirit of a man's deeds without which they are like a dead body and will not be accepted [by God].

People of Kufa, about whom Imām 'Ali complained in his sermons, and the defectors of Nahrawan (*khawārij*) were all Muslims with an impressive degree of piety. Some of them knew the Qur'an by heart and appealed to it, but did not know the Imām of their time and rebelled against him. Outwardly, they looked pious and righteous, but inwardly they were lost, and their souls were dead.[388] Khawārij declared Imām 'Ali an infidel and fought with him. They were people whose faith did not penetrate into their hearts and did not transform and awaken their spirits and remained alienated from God, about whom Imām 'Ali said, "O My God! I became disillusioned with them and they became disillusioned with me. I am tired of them and they are tired of me."[389]

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[387] "*Nothing shall be as important as called upon as to* wilāyah." Ibid., p. 286.

[388] This is an allusion to the famous *hadīth*, "He who dies and does not know the Imām of his time, dies an ignorant death" (*man māta wa lam ya'rafu imam-i zamanihi, māta maytatan jāhilīyah*).

[389] *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon 25, Abduh edition, Egypt, vol. I, p. 65.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Nineteenth Discourse

Association of a Man's Soul with Him in the Intermediate World

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *The day every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward, and what it has done of evil; it will wish if there were only a far space between it and that day. God warns you that you beware of Him; and God is gentle with His servants.*[390]

When a man dies he enters a paradise or hell in the intermediate world. These are called the heaven and hell of the intermediate world (*barzakhī*) and are the prototype of and much less significant hierarchically than the ones awaiting man on the Day of Judgment. In some narrations it is said that the intermediate world is indeed a door through which man sees heaven or hell on the Judgment Day. The joy and happiness he experiences there by seeing beautiful scenes of heaven, or fear and anxiety that descends on his heart by observing the fire and smoke, flames (*sa'īr*), trees with bitter fruit (*zaqqūm*), extreme heat (*ḥamīm*), dragons (*thu'bān*), and large snakes (*afā'ī*) are examples of what await him on the Day of Judgment and his share of heaven or hell. In some other narrations they call this "heaven or hell on earth." Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī in his treatise on *Justice and the Day of Return* identifies them with such names. The reason for this name is that the intermediate world is, in a sense, the continuation of this world. This is the paradise that Adam resided in in order to prepare to come to this world.

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[390] Qur'an 3: 30.

Ḥasan ibn Bashār once asked Imām Ṣādiq about the paradise that Adam lived in. The Imām said, "It was a heaven from among many heavens of the world in which the sun and the moon rose and set. If it were the eternal paradise he would have never left that abode."[391]

At the end of time when the trumpet is blown, then man will be sent to eternal heaven or hell.[392]

Man's traits and characteristics are hidden in this world, and when he enters the intermediate world they accompany him and are manifested in their heavenly forms. According to the Qur'an,

> *Upon the day the evildoer shall bite his hands, saying, "Would that I had taken a way along with the Messenger! Alas, would that I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! He indeed led me astray from the Remembrance, after it had come to me; Satan is ever a forsaker of men."*[393]

And the Messenger of God said, "O Lord, Indeed my people are alienated from this Qur'an."

The Qur'an identifies Satan as him who misleads people and implies that man's carnal soul is where Satan resides. Indeed man must complain of his own carnal soul that subjects him to all afflictions, hardships, and trials, and makes him accept or reject the truth. This carnal soul is attracted to the very direction that in the intermediate world man wishes, *"Would there had been between me and thee the distance of the two*

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[391] *'Ilal al-sharāyi'*, vol. II, #55, p. 600.

[392] The Qur'an describes in detail the events that lead to the beginning of the end of time and what is awaiting man. The blowing of the trumpet signifies that occasion when the entire creation will gather for reckoning. See for example, *"For when the Trumpet is blown, that day there shall be no kinship any more between them, neither will they question one another"* (21: 102); *"And the Trumpet shall be blown; that is the Day of the Threat"* (52: 19); and *"and His is the Kingdom the day the Trumpet is blown…"* (6: 71); and *"the Trumpet shall be blown, and We shall gather them together"* (18: 99).

[393] Qur'an 25: 27–30.

Easts!"[394] and about whom God says, *"and failed has he who seduces it."*[395]

In the intermediate world man encounters all his deeds, traits, intentions, and good and bad qualities. On the Day of Judgment, they will accompany man to the divine presence for reckoning.

One day Qays ibn 'Āṣim[396] went to the Prophet and asked him for advice. The Prophet said,

> O Qays! Beware! Indeed with every exaltation (*'izzah*) there is abasement (*dhillah*) as life and death, the world and the Hereafter come together. Everything has an account holder and protector. Every lifespan is written, for every good deed there is a reward and for each evil deed a punishment.
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> O Qays! Have no doubt that there is a companion to you that will be buried with you but it is alive. If that companion is generous and good, it will protect you from tribulations and hardships. And if it is mean and lowly, it will subject you to afflictions and hardships. You will rise with it on the Day of Judgment, and it will rise with you as well. You will both be questioned. So, choose a righteous and pious companion, for you will become intimate with it. If your companion is not righteous, you will be most afraid of it. This companion is none other than your deeds, and your actions in this world.

Ibn Ali'l-Ḥadīd[397] reported that the Messenger of God gave the following sermon at the end of his blessed life:

> O People! Beware! Know that between man and God there is nothing that can bring him good or cause him evil except through his deeds. Beware! No one can claim that he will be

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394 Qur'an 43: 36–38.
395 Qur'an 91: 10.
396 One of the Companions of the Prophet and a narrator of *Ḥadīth*.
397 Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, (586–656/1192–1258). One of the most famous intellectuals of the Abbasid period, and the author of the most important commentary on *Nahj al-balāghah*. See *Sharḥ nahj al-valāghah*, trans. into Persian by Rezā Rajabzādeh, Tehran, 1379/2000.

> saved by anything other than his deeds, and not because of his lineage or his ancestry. By God who has appointed me [I tell you that] nothing will save man except his action and God's mercy. Even if I commit a sin or rebel against God, I would be lost. O God! Beware that I have preached what I must.[398]

When the Prophet conquered Mecca he climbed on the top of Mount Ṣafā where he addressed the sons of Banī Hashim and Abd al-Muṭṭalib, (his paternal grandfather) in the following terms:

> Indeed I am God's Messenger sent to you and your love is in my heart. Do not say Muhammad is from us. By God! No one from among you is my friend except those who are God-fearing and pious. I will not recognize you on the Day of Judgment if you come to me while you are carrying the world on your shoulders, and others come to me while they carry the Hereafter on theirs. Beware! I fulfilled my obligation in relation to what is between me and you, and between you and God, Majestic and Glorious is He. There will be no excuse! Indeed my action will speak for me and your deeds for you.[399]

Imām Ṣādiq so eloquently described the necessity of avoiding sins in the following poem,

> You commit sin against God while you claim you love him
> This is indeed an innovation in your behavior
> If your love for God is sincere, you must be obedient to Him
> For a lover indeed must be obedient towards his beloved.[400]

Alas, the heaven in the intermediate world is not like the one in eternal paradise in which man settles forever and never leaves it. The paradise of 'Adan was in the intermediate world where Adam resided before he was expelled from it and whose

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[398] Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ-nahj al-balāghah*, vol. II, p. 563.
[399] As quoted in Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XXI, p. 111, and Kulaynī, *Rawḍah al-Kāfī*, p. 182.
[400] Ibn Shahr Ashūb, *Manāqib*, Ḥurufi edition, vol. I, p. 275.

inhabitants received their sustenance every day and night. In the eternal paradise there is no day and night as it has been described in the Qur'an and commented upon by Ali ibn Ibrāhim Qumī: "Gardens of Eden that the All-Merciful promised His servants in the Unseen; His promise is ever performed. There they shall hear no idle talk, but only 'Peace.' There they shall have their provision at dawn and evening."[401]

As we discussed in the previous discourse it is recorded in narrations that the spirits of believers are in the Abode of Peace (Wādi al-Salām) and those of the infidels in the well of Barahūt in Yemen. Barahūt is the name of a well in the Hadrmawt region of Yemen. In that well, there are many black snakes, scorpions, owls, and other beasts, so frightening that no one dares pass through it, and its extreme heat is unbearable. Imām 'Ali described that territory as "the most unbearable place where the spirits of infidels reside, and its water is the worst water on the face of the earth."[402] This is where the spirit of infidels appear in the form of owls.[403] There is a similar *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet, and a narration attributed to Imām Ṣādiq:

> Beyond Yemen there is a region known as Barahūt where nothing else other than black snakes and owls resides. There is a well in that abode called Balahūt where the spirits of infidels are taken every morning and evening and are forced to drink water that is hot as melted iron mixed with blood and dirt.[404]

According to a narration attributed to Imām 'Ali, every Thursday night the spirits of believers congregate on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.[405] Indeed, the Shī'ites of the progeny of the Prophet are welcomed in the intermediate world when

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[401] Qur'an 19: 61–62. See Ali ibn Ibrāhim Qumī, *Tafsīr*, lithograph edition, p. 412.
[402] Kulayni, *Furū al-kafi*, vol. I, p. 67.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. VI, pp. 289 and 291.
[405] Ali ibn Ibrahīm, *Tafsīr*, pp. 595–599.

they die, whereas their enemies are sent to the desert of Barahūt where they eat (*zaqqūm*)[406] and drink [extremely] hot water (*ḥamīm*).

Ash'ath ibn Qays was a general in the city of Kufa. He was a shrewd, opportunist, and mischievous man. Although in the battle of Ṣiffin he sided with Imām 'Ali, he changed his mind at the end and prevented 'Ali's victory. When 'Ali was about to defeat Mu'āwiyah, Ash'ath threatened to defect with his men and even kill 'Ali if he did not stop the fight against Mu'āwiyah. His son Muhammad fought against Imām Ḥusayn in Karbalā, and his daughter Ju'dah poisoned Imām Ḥasan. The Qur'an aptly describes the type of people this man and his family were, as it is said, "*And the likeness of a corrupt word is as a corrupt tree—uprooted from the earth, having no stablishment.*"[407]

One day Ash'ath went to Imām 'Ali's house without an invitation or advance notice. Qanbar, 'Ali's servant, wanted to prevent him from entering the house. He punched Qanbar in the nose and he started bleeding, whereupon 'Ali came out, and seeing the scene he said, "O Ash'ath! What is this behavior? Have I ever been mean to you that you behave like this?" This is how the selfish and arrogant members of the community treated 'Ali while he never retaliated, although he was the caliph of Islam and had all power to use as he pleased, yet he was always forgiving.

'Ali's government was indeed a divinely ordained one whose objective was not to dominate people and their property and honor. Rather, its purpose was to implement justice in the community and plant the seeds of love and tolerance in people's hearts. This was the objective of all messengers who were sent to liberate people from the yoke of unjust rulers and those whose hearts had turned hard out of arrogance and pride. The goal of the messengers of God was to spread love and peace so that all

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[406] Zaqqūm is a tree in hell that produces a very bitter fruit that the inhabitants of hell eat. See Mohammad Moī'n, *Farhang-i Fārsī*, p. 535, Tehran, 2nd ed., 1386/1997.

[407] Qur'an 14: 26.

the servants of God could enjoy His blessings and bounties in an equal manner, as the Qur'an emphasizes: *"Indeed, We sent Our Messengers with the clear signs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men might uphold justice."*[408]

In fact, one of the reasons that Arab leaders opposed 'Ali was the egalitarian nature of his government. They wanted to continue the practice established by 'Umar, who in his treatment of members of the community discriminated against non-Arab Muslims, whereas 'Ali put an end to those practices that were based on class privileges and ethnic affiliations, as was the tradition of the Prophet. Obviously, Arab aristocracy was not pleased with these kinds of policies and treated non-Arab Muslims like slaves to the extent that they would not allow them to marry an Arab woman.

'Ali condemned these attitudes and resisted all these practices. He tried to establish God's government on earth, a government in which the only criterion would be piety and faith in God, Majestic and Glorious is He. There is no single example of selfishness or pride in his behavior, nor any difference in treating members of the community or discriminating between Arab and non-Arab Muslims. That is the reason that prominent Arab historians such as Ahmad Amin[409] and Ibn 'Abd Rabbah in *'Iqd al-Farīd*[410]state that 'Ali's tenure was more like a prophetic state than like a worldly government.

People of Kufa, about whom Imām 'Ali complained in his sermons, and the defectors of Nahrawan (*khawārij*) were all Muslims with an impressive degree of piety. Some of them knew the Qur'an by heart and appealed to it, but did not know the Imām of their time and rebelled against him. Outwardly,

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[408] Qur'an 57: 25.

[409] Contemporary Egyptian historian who in 1940 edited and published *'Iqd al-Farīd* in Cairo.

[410] *'Iqd al-Farīd* is an encyclopedic work by Muhammad Shahāb 'Iqd al-Farīd (246–328/860–940). The book includes essays on literature and cultural, social, and political history of early Islamic societies, including a short history of Andalus. The author was extremely anti-Shī'a.

they looked pious and righteous, but inwardly they were lost, and their souls were dead.[411] Khawārij declared Imām 'Ali an infidel and fought with him. They were people whose faith did not penetrate into their hearts and did not transform and awaken their spirits and remained alienated from God, about whom Imām 'Ali said, "O My God! I became disillusioned with them and they became disillusioned with me. I am tired of them and they are tired of me."[412]

[411] This is an allusion to the famous *ḥadīth*, "He who dies and does not know the Imām of his time, dies an ignorant death" (*man māta wa lam ya'rafu imam-i zamanihi, māta maytatan jāhilīyah*).
[412] *Nahj al-balāghah*, sermon 25, Abduh edition, Egypt, vol. I, p. 65.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twentieth Discourse

Signs of the Coming of the End of Time

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *Are they looking for aught but the Hour, that it shall come upon them suddenly? Already its tokens have come; so, when it has come to them, how shall they have their Reminder?*[413]

In this chapter we shall discuss the peculiarities of the World of the Greatest Resurrection (*'ālam-i Qiyāmat-i kubrā*) and man's appearance before God and all stations and realms that man goes through in this period of life and in the Hereafter.

The tone of the verse mentioned above denotes questioning the infidels and warning them on the certainty of the coming of the Day of Resurrection. In other words, it warns them either to follow the path of the Truth and be saved, or await the Day of Judgment so that when they see its peculiarities they will believe and follow the truth. One message that is clear is the absolute certainty of the coming of the Resurrection Day.

Since infidels did not recognize God's last messenger, the descent of His Word, the cleavage of the Moon, and did not acknowledge the signs of the coming of the end of time, and rejected all proofs and did not show humility before God, there is no other means of warning them except the coming of the Day. Unfortunately, in such a situation accepting faith and becoming a believer will not be possible. It will be too late by then, for the book [of man's deeds] is closed, and the time of reckoning and accounting for man's actions [in the world] has come. On that Day as the Qur'an says,

> *When the earth is ground to powder, and thy Lord comes, and the angels rank on rank, and Gehenna is brought out, upon that day man will remember; and how shall the*

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[413] Qur'an 89: 23–24.

Reminder be for him? He shall say, "O would that I had forwarded for my life!"[414]

All verses of the Qur'an that deal with the end of time indicate that on the Day, the earth will vanish, stars will fall, the sun and the moon will become dark, and the universe will be destroyed. Then God will call all souls, including those who had died before and are waiting in the intermediate world and those who will die on that day, to His Presence for reckoning. The trumpet (*ṣawr*) will be blown two times: the first time announcing the death of all living things, and the second time declaring their coming back to life: *"For the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand, beholding."*[415]

In addition to all signs that are mentioned in Shī'i narrations about the end of time and Resurrection two events must take place before the Day of Judgment. One is the coming out of occultation of the Twelfth Imām, the Mahdi, and the second is the return of the progeny of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) to this world. There is no doubt or dispute about the certainty of both of these events. The appearance of the Mahdi is believed in and expected in all branches of Islam and among all different groups of Muslims. The return of the Household of the Prophet is a belief peculiar to the Shī'ites, and one of its certainties. In the past these two issues were criteria that differentiated Shī'ites and non-Shī'ites.

Generally speaking, man and the world must go through three stages to attain perfection:

1. The coming out of occultation of the Twelfth Imām;

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[414] Qur'an 89: 23–25.
[415] Qur'an 39: 68.

2. The Return of the Household of the Prophet to the world (*raj'at*), which illuminates the world and helps all potentialities of man to actualize; and

3. The coming of the Day of Resurrection that will bring the first two events to their utmost perfection, when all other identities and existences disappear, and God's Power and the Majesty of His Presence will be manifested. These three events will take place one after the other and in the order described, each one paving the way for the next.

There are many narrations about these events. Although some of them are weak and unreliable, many are sound and trustworthy, and by studying them one can learn the specific signs of each one of these stages.

In the commentary written by 'Ali ibn Ibrahīm Qumī, which is one of the most trusted and reliable sources on this subject, Qumī narrates a sound *ḥadīth* on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, who said,

> On his last pilgrimage to Mecca known as the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-widā'*), we were in the company of the Messenger of God, May God's greetings be with him. The Prophet took the lock of the Ka'bah in his hand and turned to us and said, "Do you want me to inform you of the signs and conditions of the end of time?"
>
> At that time Salmān was standing close to him and said, "O Messenger of God! Inform us of the signs of the end of time."
>
> "One of the signs of the end of time is that people will take [daily] prayer lightly and spoil it. They will follow their appetite and respond to the desires of the carnal soul. They will glorify money and wealth and sell their religion for the world. In such a situation, the heart of believers will melt as salt dissolves in water, as they see reprehensible practices before their own eyes and will have no power to change the situation."

Salmān then asked if all these things will truly take place, and the Prophet replied,

"By the One in whose hand is my life these all will take place. O Salmān! At the time corrupt and oppressive rulers will rule over the affairs of believers. Their ministers will be corrupt and scholars will be oppressors, and those whom they trust will betray them. Evil and reprehensible practices will be condoned as good acts and good acts will be seen as reprehensible. Those who are trusted will be treacherous.

"O Salmān! When the end of time approaches, evil and sin will be considered good deeds and good deeds will be seen as evil. Treacherous people will be trusted [by the people] and honest men will be accused of treason. Men who are deceptive and who lie will be recognized as truthful and men of truth will be seen as mendacious and lying.

"O Salmān! Then women will rule over men, and low people and slaves will be consulted and trusted. The young and ignorant will occupy the pulpit. Lying will become an art and a skill, charity will be considered as a loss, stealing from the public treasury will be seen as gain and profit. People will treat their parents brutally but will be kind to their friends. A long-tailed star will appear in sky. Noble people will become subject to hostility and the poor will be looked down on. People will be killed if they speak against their rulers, and if they obey them, they will steal their wealth and property, and violate their women and their honor, shed their blood, and frighten people, who will be in a constant state of insecurity and fear. They will despise and insult noble people. Outwardly they look like humans but their hearts are the hearts of devils.

"O Salmān! At the end of time, men will be attracted to men and women to women. Men will resemble women and women will look like men. They will decorate mosques as they do churches and synagogues, and adorn the Qur'an. They will build tall minarets. Prayer lines will be long and a lot of people will participate in congregational prayer while their hearts are filled with hatred and anger and speak in foul language with each other. At that time the men of my

community will adorn themselves with gold, will wear clothing made of silk and coats made of the fur of tigers. Usury will be practiced in my community, bribery and backbiting will prevail, and religion will become corrupted and despised, while the world will be glorified and loved. Divorce will be widespread, and God's command will be violated. None of these, however, will harm or bother God. At such an age the rich in my community will go to make pilgrimage to Mecca (*Ḥajj*) to have a good time, the less rich will go there for trade and commercial incentives, and the poor for recognition and fame. Many people will learn the Qur'an [to please] other than God. There will be people who will "sing" the Qur'an accompanied by musical instruments, and people who will study religious sciences for the sake of other than God. There will be many illegitimate children [out of wedlock] and people will race for the world and compete for mundane things.

"At that time the sanctity of everything will be violated, and things that are forbidden (*ḥarām*) will spread. Evil and corrupt people will dominate over good and noble people, falsehood will prevail, and arrogance and poverty will spread. People will brag and show off their clothes. Unseasonable rain will fall often. People will be preoccupied with vain play and will dislike commanding good and forbidding the reprehensible. Pious people will be despised and seen as the lowest of the low among people. Among the pious and scholars blaming each other will become common. These are the people who in heaven are called impure (*arjās*) and unclean (*anjās*). At such time, the rich will not fear anything except poverty to the extent that if the poor among them ask for help from one Friday to the next, no one will give anything to him. The mean and contemptible men (*al-ruwaybaḍah*) will assume guiding people."

Salmān then asked, "May my mother and father be ransoms for you! Who are these mean and incompetent men (*al-ruibaḍah*)?"

"They are men who handle people's affairs and guide them while they are not qualified to do so. When all these events

take place, not much time is left till a loud sound reverberates throughout the earth. This sound is so strong and loud that every nation assumes that it only happened in his neighborhood. After that people will become calm, and peace will prevail for a short while as God wills, but people will suffer from much hardship. Then they will see that the earth pours out that which was hidden in its heart (.i.e. silver and gold)."

The Prophet pointed towards columns and said, "Gold and silver like these columns."

Salmān then asked, "O Messenger of God! Will all these events truly happen?"

The Prophet replied, "By the One in whose hand is my life these all will happen. However, on that day neither silver nor gold will be of any use. This is what God meant when he said, *'Now its condition will come.'*"[416]

In this world, which is the world of contingencies, people live with illusions and falsehoods. As this verse clearly says, however, in order to stand before God on the Day of Judgment man's heart will change altogether, for that world is the world of consciousness and truth. *"And to that all hearts will change."*[417]

We take refuge in God from the temptations of the carnal soul, which, if left alone, will rebel with a rebellion that knows no limits and will pull man to wretchedness and the depth of destruction; so much so that nothing other than the fire of hell can cure its illnesses.

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[416] Qur'an 5: 54.
[417] Qur'an 29: 21.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-First Discourse

Signs of the Day of Resurrection

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Are they looking for aught but the Hour, that it shall come upon them suddenly? Already its tokens have come;*[418]

As we mentioned previously, there are some parallel traditions (*aḥādīth-i mutawātir*) that explain man's state when the end of time approaches. According to these narrations people will change and will begin to lose the qualities that make them human. Corruption and moral laxity will grow, compassion and care for others will disappear, people's honor will be violated, the weak and the poor will not be cared for, the elderly and the noble will not be respected, and justice will not rule in the society.

Ḥudhayfah ibn Asad[419] narrated that one day there was a group that always talked about the signs of the end of time. One day the Prophet was nearby and heard their conversation and came to them. Then he said,

> The end of time will not arrive until ten conditions are present. They include the coming of the anti-Christ (*dajjāl*), the appearance of thick smoke in the sky, the rising of the sun from the West, the coming out of the earth of a beast, the appearance of Gog (Ya'jūj) and Magog (Ma'jūj), the emergence of three wells pierced in the mountains, one in the East, the second in the West, and the third in the Arabian Peninsula, and the fire that starts from 'Adan and will follow the people until it pushes them towards the place of

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[418] Qur'an 47: 18.

[419] One of the close companions of the Prophet who participated in the battles of Badr and Uḥud.

congregation on the Day of Judgment (*maḥshar*). The tenth and final sign is the second coming of Christ.[420]

Similar allusions also can be found in the Qur'an regarding this issue. For example,

> *What, do they look for the angels to come to them, nothing less, or that thy Lord should come, or that one of thy Lord's signs should come? On the day that one of thy Lord's signs comes it shall not profit a soul to believe that never believed before, or earned some good in his belief. Say: "Watch and wait; We too are waiting."*[421]

The signs that people wait to see in order to believe are not like the signs they see in day-to-day life like the sun, the moon or clouds, and the like. They must be extraordinary signs that people have never seen before. Those are very exceptional signs that demonstrate God's unfamiliar and miraculous power in such a way that when the unbelievers see them they will no longer be able to deny God and His power. We can see that in these verses the second coming of Christ and the sun rising from the West correspond to extraordinary signs. God says in the Qur'an,

> *He [Dhu'lqarnayn] said, "This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into powder; and my Lord's promise is ever true." Upon that day We shall leave them surging on one another, and the Trumpet shall be blown, and We shall gather them together.*[422]

Dhu'l-qarnayn[423] constructed a barrier for those people and said, "This is a mercy from my Lord bestowed upon me. This barrier will remain solid until my Lord's promise about the end of time is fulfilled, and when it is fulfilled He shall remove it.

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420 *Kitāb al-khiṣāl*, chapter X, *ḥadīth* #13, pp. 431–432.
421 Qur'an 6: 158.
422 Qur'an 18: 98–101.
423 See Qur'an 18: 94–96.

God's promise is true. On such a day, *"We shall present Hell to the unbelievers whose eyes were covered against My remembrance, and they were not able to hear."*[424] In order to clarify the meaning of this noble verse that deals with signs of the end of time we must identify and address three issues here.

The first is the identity of the Dhu'lqarnayn, whose name is mentioned only once in the Qur'an. There is a variety of opinion about his identity. According to Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, differences of opinion between the Sunnis and Shī'ites about the identity of this person are truly strange. Not only are there contradictions between the reports provided by scholars of the two communities, but there are also some false and imaginary assertions that are historically and intellectually impossible. An examination of these reports reveals a great deal of distortions. The most distorted report belongs to some formerly Jewish scholars who entered Islam, such as Ibn Munabbah[425] and Ka'b al-Akhbār.[426]

According to Ṭabāṭabā'ī the Qur'an does not deal in detail with Dhu'lqarnayn except to say that he traveled to the West and punished a nation that oppressed other people, then traveled to the East and built a barrier for another nation, and went far to help a primitive nation. He was a believer and a monotheist. He established a vast empire that extended from east to west. He was a forgiving and generous ruler who spread justice and peace. Therefore, he was saved in this world and in the Hereafter. He enjoyed temporal as well as spiritual authority.

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[424] Qur'an 18: 101.

[425] Wahb ibn Munabbih ibn Kāmil al-Yamanī (d. 110/729) was a scholar of *Ḥadīth* and a historian. He was one of the *tābiūn* and met many companions of the Prophet and recorded their narrations of *Ḥadīth*. He wrote *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā* and *Kitāb al-Isrāilīyāt*. See R. G. Khoury, "Wahb b. Munabbih, Abū 'Abd Allāh."

[426] Known as Ka'b al-Akhbār, Abū Isḥāq Ka'b ibn Māni' Ḥimyarī was a prominent Jewish scholar in Yemen prior to Islam and during the period of Ignorance (*Jāhilīyah*). He entered Islam after the Prophet passed away, and lived for 104 years. See, Zirikly, *A'lām*, 6: 85.

We cannot definitely identify a ruler with these characteristics in history. Ḥasan ibn Qaḥṭān Marvazi in his *Kayhān shenakht*[427] identifies him as Belinnes, the king of the Assyrians. In *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī*[428] he is identified as Fereydūn, the fifth king of the Pīshdādiyān dynasty of Persia. Abu Zayd Balkhī in his *Suwar al-aqālīm*[429] says that he received revelation. Some others like Avicenna and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī claimed that Dhu'lqarnayn was the same as Alexander the Great. More recently scholars such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan as well as Mawlana Abulkalām Āzād came to conclusion that Dhu'lqarnayn was another title for Cyrus the Great, the Persian king of the Achamenid dynasty.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī believed that the latter conclusion was valid because the Qur'an identified Dhu'lqarnayn as a believer and a monotheist who ruled over a vast empire, treated people with justice, and freed the Jews from Babylon. He was upright in religion, and was a virtuous and ethical king. His journeys and accomplishments correspond to what the Qur'an described of Dhu'lqarnayn. In addition, his name is mentioned both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

As to the Gog and Magog, their names are mentioned two times in the Qur'an, once in chapter eighteen, verse 90, which we alluded to, and the second time in verses 96–97 in chapter 21:

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[427] One of the most famous mathematicians of the 6th/12 century (d. 548/1153). See Zabihullah Ṣafā, *Tarikh-i adabiyyāt-i Iran*, vol. I p. 190, 18th ed., Tehran, 1379/1980.

[428] *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī* is one of the most complete commentaries on the Qur'an, nearly on par with Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi's *Tafsīr al-kabir*. Its author is Mahmood Efendi al-Alusi (1217–1270/1803–1854).

[429] Abū Zayd Balkhī (d. 322/934), the well-known fourth-century theologian and philosopher from Khorasan, was the author of *Suwar al-aqālīm* on geography and a commentary on the Qur'an titled *Naẓm al-Qur'an*. The original copy of the first book is lost, but its Persian translation is available. See Z. Ṣafā, vol. I, pp. 77 and 79.

> *O Dhool Karnain, behold, Gog and Magog are doing corruption in the earth;*[430]

and,

> *There is a ban upon any city that We have destroyed; they shall not return till, when Gog and Magog are unloosed, and they slide down out of every slope, and nigh has drawn the true promise, and behold, the eyes of the unbelievers staring: "Alas for us! We were heedless of this; nay, we were evildoers.*[431]

The names of these two peoples are also mentioned in the Old Testament. According to the Book of Genesis, verses 38–39,[432] these two nations lived in northern parts of Asia and were good warriors.

Etymologically Gog and Magog are derived from the Chinese names Mangog and Manchog. These names entered Arabic and Hebrew as *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* and the Greek language as Magog and Mangog. It is safe to conclude that these names refer to the Mongols who attacked Armenia and Iran from the north. In Europe they are known as the Sait and in Greek as the Sitehin. These names are both mentioned in the tablet of the Persian king Darius in Istakhr in the Fars province. As to the barrier, it must be the same barrier that was built in Caucasus. It is called the Iron Gate (Damir Qāpū) in Turkish. Greek historians such as Herodotus have recorded Cyrus the Great's attack on the Caspian Sea region to end a mutiny. Reportedly he built the barrier during the same expedition that is called the Cyrus Barrier.

As we mentioned before, the destruction of this barrier is mentioned in the Qur'an as one of the signs of the end of time. The other sign is the opening of cities and towns to the people

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[430] Qur'an 18: 90.

[431] Qur'an 21: 96–97.

[432] See Ezekiel chapters 38–39. I am indebted to Abigail Tardiff for bringing the correct source to my attention.

known as Gog and Magog. When the Qur'an discusses the invasion of these two nations it says, "*When the promise of my Lord cometh to pass, he will lay it low, for the promise of my Lord is true.*"[433] In our opinion the word "destruction" (*dakā'*) most possibly means the removal of borders among nations, as such an act renders the barrier null and void. This would mean that towards the end of time nations and peoples will become closer to one another in such a way that no barriers will remain among them. This was what God promised when He discussed the coming of the two nations (Gog and Magog). There was no longer any discussion of the barrier, "*when Gog and Magog are unloosed, and they slide down out of every slope, and nigh has drawn the true promise.*"[434]

Having said this all, we must mention that in several parallel *aḥādīth* and narrations recorded by both Sunni and Shī'a scholars, Dhu'lqarnayn is identified as a person who was hit by two strikes to his head. This identification corresponds with Imām 'Ali, who received two strikes to his head, one by 'Umar ibn Abduwud in the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq)[435] and another one by Ibn Muljam Murādī, his assassin, that resulted in his martyrdom. Therefore, identifying Cyrus the Great as Dhu'lqarnayn is questionable. A *ḥadīth* of the Prophet indeed supports this claim as he once said, "Indeed [O 'Ali!] there is an abode for you in paradise and you are its Dhu'lqarnayn."[436]

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[433] Qur'an 18: 98.
[434] Qur'an 21: 96–97.
[435] On this battle and its outcome see Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, pp. 167–174; Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, London: Darwin Press, 1998; Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1983. See also Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.
[436] See Muhammd ibn Mas'ood 'Ayyāshi, *Tafsīr*; and Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib Ṭabarsī, *Kitāb al-iḥtijāj*. See also Abū 'Ubayd Qāsim ibn Salām al-Hirawi, *Gharīb al-Hadith*, Vol. III, pp. 78–79.

The other sign of the approaching of the end of time is a thick smoke in sky, as the Qur'an describes: "*So be on the watch for a day when heaven shall bring a manifest smoke.*"[437]

Finally, the last sign of the coming of the end of time is the appearance of a beast (*dābbat al-arḍ*) from the earth, which speaks to the people and separates believers from infidels. "*When the Word falls on them, We shall bring forth for them out of the earth a beast that shall speak unto them: 'Mankind had no faith in Our signs.'*"[438]

The Qur'an does not mention the name of this beast. There is subtle point in this silence as the name of 'Ali is also not mentioned in the Qur'an. 'Ali is a Friend of God (*walī*) and in a sense the entire Qur'an is about *wilāyah*. Imām Ṣādiq narrated:

> One day the Prophet went to the mosque and noticed 'Ali was asleep on a pillow made of pebbles. He tried to wake him up and called to him, "O pebbles of God, rise!" (*Qom yā dabbat'llah*). One of the Companions asked the Messenger of God if he could also be addressed with the same epithet, whereupon the Prophet said, "No! By God, no! This title belongs to 'Ali alone." The he added, "O 'Ali! At the end of time God will bring you out with a tool in your hand with which you mark your enemies." The verse of the Qur'an indeed gives testimony to this event, "*Upon the day when We shall muster out of every nation a troop of those that cried lies to Our signs...*"[439]

The Commander of the Faithful is one of those signs that people cry lies to. His is the station of *wilāyah* that will manifest itself with the coming of the end of time. The *wilāyah* as such is present in our time as well, but it does not reveal itself to the people except to those who have traversed the path of the greatest spiritual struggle (*jihād al-akbar*) and who have transcended the station of purity and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and have joined God's special servants. They see everything in the world

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[437] Qur'an 44: 10.
[438] Qur'an 27: 82.
[439] Qur'an 27: 85.

of contingencies under the dominion of *wilāyah*. On the Day of Return, *wilāyah* will reveal itself to all people.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Second Discourse

The Blowing of the Trumpet and the Resurrection of the Dead

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *On the day the Trumpet is blown, and terrified is whosoever is in the heavens and earth, excepting whom God wills, and every one shall come to Him, all utterly abject; and thou shalt see the mountains, that thou supposest fixed, passing by like clouds—God's handiwork, who has created everything very well. He is aware of the things you do. Whosoever comes with a good deed, he shall have better than it; and they shall be secure from terror that day. And whosoever comes with an evil deed, their faces shall be thrust into the Fire: "Are you recompensed but for what you did?"*[440]

The blessed verse cited above is known as "blowing fear" (*nafkh-i faza'*). Similarly, the following verse is known as "blowing swoon" (*nafkh-i ṣa'aq*): *"For the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand, beholding.*[441]

These two terms, *faza'* and *ṣa'aq*, both mean the same thing [more or less] and denote fear and horror that often leads to death. In the Qur'an blowing fear is discussed two times in chapter 39: once when all creatures die and the second time when all return to life and stand in God's presence for reckoning. Shaykh Ṭabarsī speaks of the trumpet blowing three times, and the third is the blowing of the trumpet for Resurrection and standing for reckoning on the Day of Judgment. However, we believe that those two incidents concern the people of the intermediate world. The fear that

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[440] Qur'an 27: 87–90.
[441] Qur'an 39: 68.

overwhelms people as a result of the blowing of the trumpet is called *ṣayḥah* in the Qur'an: "*It was only one Cry and lo, they were silent and still.*"[442] Similarly, in another verse we read, "*They are awaiting only for one Cry to seize them while they are yet disputing, then they will not be able to make any testament, nor will they return to their people.*"[443] In any case, according to narrations the coming of the Day of Judgment is so sudden that people will not get a chance to do anything or prepare themselves. Now, let us see what the blowing of the trumpet is.

The trumpet (*ṣawr*) mentioned in these verses is made of the horn of an animal, and blowing it signals death, Resurrection, and preparation [for reckoning]. The phrase "blowing the horn" (*nafkhah-ye ṣawr*) is mentioned 10 times, and the fear caused by that (*ṣayḥah*) some 13 times in the Qur'an. These two terms (*faza'* and *ṣa'aq*) both refer to death and the end of life. All other terms used in this context [such as *ṣayḥa*] refer to Resurrection. Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn Sajjād in the third prayer of Ṣaḥifah Sajjādīyah (Psalm of the *Ahl al-Bayt*) calls the angel Isrāfīl the holder of the horn (Ṣāḥib al-Ṣawr).[444]

It is necessary to mention that the intermediate world and its creatures and inhabitants are not in any way or form similar to the material world and its inhabitants, as the abode of Resurrection is not similar to the intermediate world. In order to enter the intermediate world man must be fully detached from the qualities of the material world. Similarly, to enter the abode of Resurrection he must be denuded of all attachments to the intermediate world. As long as a man is attached to the attributes of the lower world, he is incapable of ascending to a higher realm. That is the reason the Noble Qur'an and the Infallible Imāms use metaphors to describe the intelligible (*ma'qulāt*) in sensible (*mahsusat*) terms. For example, spiritual sustenance in a vision is seen as milk, for it is pure, clean, and easy to digest;

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[442] Qur'an 36: 29.
[443] Qur'an 36: 49–50.
[444] Ṣaḥifah Sajjādīyah (Psalm of the *Ahl al-Bayt*), translated into English by William Chittick, London, Muhammadi Trust, 1988, p. 23.

or swimming in the ocean in a dream is interpreted as immersion in the ocean of knowledge, and the like.

The Qur'an says:

> *Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days—then sat Himself upon the Throne,*[445]

and,

> *His Throne comprises the heavens and earth; the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-High, the All-Glorious.*[446]

God is in the Absolute and Infinite Being, non-compound and Simple (*basīṭ*). He is not contained in quality and quantity. However, since in the world of nature sovereignty and domination is represented by kings, the throne, and the like, and He wills to manifest His sovereign domination over the world of existence, He uses metaphors of the throne that symbolize His domination, His will and ordinance. The Divine Throne encompasses heaven and earth, and His Footstool *('arsh)* dominates over the world of existence and all contingencies, even His Names and Attributes. He is the only and the Absolute King of the world of existence. His Footstool is the lowest realm of the world of Domination (*malakūt-i asfal*) and governs over the world of nature (*'ālam-i ṭab'*). His Throne is the highest realm of the world of Dominion (*malakūt-e a'lā*), which governs over both the Footstool and the world of nature. However, the Divine Throne does not refer to a "thing" with dimensions or direction. Rather, it denotes His power and command and relates to all beings that have been given existence. There are many other similar examples in the Qur'an, *Ḥadīth*, and narrations that are used to denote universal concepts and meaning. Often such terms and vocabularies represent the concept, and there is no need to use metaphors or symbols, as

445 Qur'an 7: 54.
446 Qur'an 2: 255.

the Prophet explained: "We, [the prophets] were commanded to speak to the people in accordance with the level of their intellect."[447]

Isrāfīl was one of the angels brought nigh to God whose function is to bring back the dead to life on the Day of Judgment. His trumpet is indeed his God-given ability and power. It is his knowledge that is under God's command. He blows the trumpet for all dead people and brings them back to life. His trumpet dominates over low and high realms and encompasses all. Imām Sajjād said that the trumpet has two prongs, and the distance between the two is as vast as heaven and earth.[448] In other words, it calls the people of heaven and earth both. The event has been described in some verses of the Qur'an in such terms as "the call" or "a caller calling" the people:

> *And listen thou for the day when the caller shall call from a near place. On the day they hear the Cry in truth, that is the day of coming forth. It is We who give life, and make to die, and to Us is the homecoming. Upon the day when the earth is split asunder from about them as they hasten forth: that is a mustering easy for Us. We know very well what they say; thou art not a tyrant over them.*[449]

The above verse discusses the Day of Judgment. The call is real as is hearing it. Man will be brought back to life and will hear the call. This is the call for revival and Resurrection. The first call whereby all living creatures die is the actualization of the Divine Name al-Mumīt (He who takes life), and the second call that brings all the dead back to life is the manifestation of the Name al-Muḥyī (the Giver of life) that will be made possible through the agency of Isrāfīl, as we read in the Qur'an: "*It is He who gives life, and makes to die; and when He decrees a thing, He but says to it 'Be,' and it is.*"[450]

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[447] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XVII, p. 41.
[448] Qumī, *Tafsīr*, lithograph edition, p. 580.
[449] Qur'an 50: 41–42.
[450] Qur'an 40: 68.

One may ask here why in the previous verse the word "swoon" (*nafkh-i ṣa'aq*) and not "death" is used while the same event is described.[451] The answer is that "death" denotes the departure of the spirit from the body, and the inhabitants of the intermediate world do not have bodily form. However, death does not *always* signify the departure of the spirit from the body, as God describes the inhabitants of paradise as those who "*...shall not taste therein death, save the first death,*"[452] that is, the death they experienced in this world, for, "*Those shall enter Paradise, therein provided without reckoning.*"[453] Therefore, the inhabitants of paradise do not die twice, in contrast to others who die once when they leave this world and enter the intermediate world, and a second time when they leave the intermediate world and enter the realm of Resurrection and the Judgment Day. That is why the inhabitants of hell shall say, "*Our Lord, Thou hast caused us to die two deaths and Thou hast given us twice to live; now we confess our sins. Is there any way to go forth?*"[454]

In the Commentary on the Qur'an written by 'Ali ibn Ibrāhīm Qumī, there is a narration attributed to Imām Sajjād concerning verse 39: 68 in which he describes the event of the blowing of the trumpet in detail and the death of all creatures. According to him, on that day all living beings in heaven and on earth will die except the Angel Isrāfīl until God commands him to die. Then God pauses for as long as He wills. In such a situation, everything returns to God, and God sits on His Throne [i.e. He dominates over all things], and He calls "*Whose is the Kingdom today?*"[455] There will be nothing but total silence, whereupon He will respond to His Self, "*God's, the One, the Omnipotent.*"[456] "Indeed! I am God, there is no god but I, the

451 See Qur'an 39: 68.
452 Qur'an 44: 56.
453 Qur'an 40: 40.
454 Qur'an 40: 11
455 Qur'an 40: 16
456 Ibid.

One, there is no partner to me nor a vizier. Verily I gave life to My creatures with My own hand, and I took life away from them and I give life back to them by My power."[457]

Then God Himself shall blow the trumpet once, and all inhabitants of heaven shall return to life and stand. All angels who carry heaven and earth [on their shoulders] return and all creatures prepare for reckoning. Imām 'Ali once described the day in the following terms:

> The trumpet shall be blown once and all living creatures shall die, all speaking tongues shall become mute, tall buildings shall collapse, solid [mountains] shall fall apart, certainties of the world shall become meaningless and illusive, and their existence shall perish. On such a day there shall be no intercessor to intercede [on anyone's behalf], there shall be no friend to defend friends, and no excuse shall be accepted.[458]

After being struck by a poisonous sword, 'Ali gave a penetrating sermon to his son [Imām Ḥasan] that contained a fascinating piece of advice, the like of which nobody has left behind:

> I was your companion till yesterday, and today I am an example for you to take heed, and tomorrow I will depart this world. May God forgive you and me. If I survive this will be the command, and if I die I shall be sitting under the shade of trees where mild wind blows and above us is the clear and blue sky, with no trace of clouds.
>
> Indeed, I was just your neighbor for a few days in my body. Soon, you will not find anything of me but a body without a spirit, a silent tongue after so many speeches, and a dead body. My demise should give you a lesson and my lifeless eyes and motionless body should be a great example. This

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[457] 'Ali ibn Ibrahim Qumī, *Tafsīr*, lithograph edition, pp. 580–581.

[458] *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon #193, vol. I (Abduh edition), Cairo, pp. 404–405.

state of mine is the most powerful message for those who take heed and the strongest warning for those who can hear the best of advice.[459]

[459] Ibid, sermon #147, pp. 268–269.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Third Discourse

The Blowing of the Trumpet and Resurrection: Exceptions

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *For the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand, beholding. And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord, and the Book shall be set in place, and the Prophets and witnesses shall be brought, and justly the issue be decided between them, and they not wronged.*[460]

As we discussed before, the phrase "blowing the Trumpet" is used as a metaphor to explain the exalted universal concepts of the intelligible world of detachment in particular in familiar concepts and terms of the sensible world. Hence, the first blowing of the trumpet signifies death and annihilation in the Divine Essence as every existing thing must return to God, as the Qur'an indicates: *"and unto God is the homecoming."*[461]

The second blowing of the trumpet denotes the revival and Resurrection, when all things find sustenance in God. Man, the angels, and all high spirits will attain the station of annihilation (*fanā'*) in God when they reach the station of subsistence in God (*baqa'*) and subsist there in the divine Essence.

Now the important question is, *"who are those in heaven and earth"* who are not subject to fear that God wills not to swoon? These are the people who have already died and reside in the intermediate world (*barzakh*) waiting for the world of Resurrection, and not those who are still living on earth. The latter group cannot skip the intermediate world and must go

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[460] Qur'an 39: 68–69.

[461] Qur'an 3: 26, 11: 123, 42: 53, 53: 42, and 84: 6.

through it in their own turn, as the Qur'an says: "*...behind them, is a barrier until the day that they shall be raised up.*"[462]

Therefore, all existing things must go through the intermediate world as God ordained, and none can skip that world. As we mentioned before, the intermediate world is, in a sense, a continuation of this world, and that is why it is sometimes called the World of the Grave or the World of the Earth. The Qur'an describes the state of man while he is in the intermediate world in the following terms,

> *Upon the day when the Hour is come, the sinners shall swear they have not tarried above an hour; so they were perverted. But those who have been given knowledge and faith shall say, "You have tarried in God's Book till the Day of the Upraising. This is the Day of the Upraising, but you did not know." So that day their excuses will not profit the evildoers, nor will they be suffered to make amends.*[463]

and,

> *He shall say, "How long have you tarried in the earth, by number of years?" They shall say, "We have tarried a day, or part of a day; ask the numberers!" He shall say, "You have tarried but a little, did you know. What, did you think that We created you only for sport, and that you would not be returned to Us?"*[464]

As to those who are in heaven, they are those angelic and detached spirits who were blissful and were brought nigh to God. They are the sacred souls and shining jewels of heavenly abodes that either did not go through the intermediate world or passed through it in peace and ease and entered the realm of spirit in heaven.

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[462] Qur'an 23: 100.
[463] Qur'an 30: 55–56.
[464] Qur'an 23: 112–14.

> *And in heaven is your provision, and that you are promised.*[465]

and,

> *Say: "You have the tryst of a day that you shall not put back by a single hour nor put it forward."*[466]

Many other verses of the Qur'an indeed pertain to this discussion[467] and they refer to this group of God's virtuous servants as People of the Right Hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*).

When the trumpet is blown, all creatures of heaven and earth die. Even those angels brought nigh to God like Gabriel (Jibra'īl) and Michael (Mikāy'īl) will die. Now the important question is, "*who are those in heaven and earth*" that God will not allow to swoon?[468] Their stations must be so exalted that they will not get scared, nor will they die. Two verses of the Qur'an describe the station of this group of people: "*On the day the Trumpet is blown, and terrified is whosoever is in the heavens and earth, excepting whom God wills, and every one shall come to Him, all utterly abject.*"[469]

Those who are exempted from fear and death on such a day are introduced in the subsequent verses in the same chapter: "*Whosoever comes with a good deed, he shall have better than it; and they shall be secure from terror that day. And whosoever comes with an evil deed, their faces shall be thrust into the Fire: 'Are you recompensed but for what you did?'*"[470]

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[465] Qur'an 51: 22.
[466] Qur'an 34: 30. Many other verses of the Qur'an indeed pertain to this discussion and speak of three occasions that the trumpet is blown. One time it is blown on earth, to which the Qur'an refers in terms like *ṣākhkhah, naqr*, and *zajror yawma yunad'il munād*. The other two occasions of the blowing of the trumpet are after death. See also Qur'an 35: 72, 35: 10, 58: 11, and 70: 4.
[467] See for example 34: 30, 35: 10, 35: 72, and 58: 11.
[468] Qur'an 39: 68–69.
[469] Qur'an 27: 87.
[470] Qur'an 27: 89–90.

In these verses "good deed" is understood in its absolute meaning and not in relative and differentiated terms. In its differentiated sense all people who did some good deed would be included in the meaning of the term; hence there is no need to mention exemptions. If a person performs some good deed in this world but combined it with some evil act, he will not be exempted (*faza'*). In other words, that exemption applies only to those servants of God who were absolutely good, that is, their nature and all traits and qualities were good; hence they are exempted (*faza'*) when the trumpet is blown. On the other hand, we also know that God condemns evil deeds, and those who commit them will be sent to hell:

> *...and the unbelievers will be mustered into Gehenna, that God may distinguish the corrupt from the good, and place the corrupt one upon another, and so heap them up all together, and put them in Gehenna.*[471]

and,

> *Corrupt women for corrupt men, and corrupt men for corrupt women; good women for good men, and good men for good women—these are declared quit of what they say; theirs shall be forgiveness and generous provision.*[472]

As one can notice, all kinds of evil deeds lack purity and contaminate and corrupt the soul, as the Qur'an says: "*But as for those in whose heart is sickness, them it has increased in abomination added to their abomination, and they have died while they were unbelievers.*"[473]

Thus, many among the believers will not be immune from evil deeds and impurities, except those whose heart is with God and do not seek peace and serenity anywhere else but in His presence. Those are [the servants] who do not assign a partner to Him in His Names and Attributes, or in His Essence. Such people become pure in their essence and act, and their reality

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[471] Qur'an 8: 37.
[472] Qur'an 24: 26.
[473] Qur'an 9: 125.

and secrets will be immune from the onslaught of Satan. They will live in God's sanctuary without anxiety and fear and live there happy and content. It is in reference to these servants of God that the Qur'an states, *"So God recompenses the godfearing, whom the angels take while they are goodly, saying, 'Peace be on you! Enter Paradise for that you were doing.'"*[474] These servants have become fully pure inwardly and outwardly and have entrusted all their affairs to God. This is the meaning of *wilāyah*; *"and whosoever gains a good deed, We shall give him increase of good in respect of it. Surely God is All-forgiving, All-thankful."*[475]

In his commentary on the meaning of good and evil deeds, 'Ali ibn Ibrāhīm Qumī states, "By God! A good deed is friendship with the Commander of the Faithful ('Ali) and an evil deed is enmity with him."[476]

It is narrated in *Uṣūl al-kāfi* on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq that Imām 'Ali once defined the good deed (*ḥasanah*) as follows: "The good deed (*ḥasanah*) is to attain knowledge of *wilāyah*, and the love of the Progeny (*Ahl al-Bayt*) of the Prophet. The evil deed (*sayyi'ah*) in contrast, is to reject *wilāyah* and be hostile to the Household of the Messenger of God."[477]

Then he ('Ali) recited the following verses: *"For the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand, beholding."*[478]

Thus, in light of this explanation and in consideration of this and other verses *"those in heaven and earth"* that God wills not to swoon[479] are indeed those servants of God who have been purified by God (*mukhlaṣīn*) and who will be exempted from

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[474] Qur'an 16: 32.
[475] Qur'an 42: 23.
[476] Qumī, op. cit., p. 480.
[477] Kulayni, *Uṣūl al-kāfi*, vol. I, p. 185.
[478] Qur'an 39: 68–69.
[479] Qur'an 39: 68–69.

being present on the Day of Reckoning. These are the ones that will be immune from Satan's temptation as we read in the Qur'an: "*Said he, 'Now, by Thy glory, I shall pervert them all together, excepting those Thy servants among them that are sincere.*'"[480]

Satan deceives people by lying to them and making false promises. People accept his promises and are fooled by him because of their own wretchedness and weakness in their nature. In other words, the blame is on the people themselves, and not on Satan, as the Qur'an says:

> *God surely promised you a true promise; and I promised you, then I failed you, for I had no authority over you, but that I called you, and you answered me. So do not blame me, but blame yourselves; I cannot aid you, neither can you aid me. I disbelieved in your associating me with God aforetime.*[481]

God's purified servants, however, are those who have been cleansed from all kinds of dualities and imperfections. They do not see anything other than God, do not believe in existence independent of God, and do not see themselves to possess wealth, knowledge, power, and any other quality independent of God. This is the meaning of *wilāyah*. Therefore, Friends of God (*awliyā'llah*) who are exempt from fear and swooning according to the aforementioned verses are those people who traverse on the path of sincerity and those whose acts are for God's sake, Majestic and Glorious is He. They are the ones who have left the realm of duality, have gone through all the stations of pure servants of God (*mukhliṣīn*) and entered the abode of purity and sincerity. *In such a high station nothing of their own "self" is left that needs to be taken by the Angel of Death.* Their reality and innermost secrets are fully annihilated in God.

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[480] Qur'an 38: 127, 128.
[481] Qur'an 14: 22.

By performing supererogatory prayers (*nawāfil*) and all deeds that are loved by the Beloved, they have earned His love and are loved by Him, as the *ḥadīth qudsi* alludes to:

> My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant draws to Me with supererogatory prayers so that I shall love him. And when I love him I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.
>
> If he calls Me I will respond to him, and if he asks Me for something, I will give it to him. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate to hurt him.

The *wilāyah* of Imām 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib and his immaculate descendants denotes that they attained the station of annihilation in God and found subsistence in Him (*baqā' ba'd al-fanā'*) and reached the station of the absolute servanthood to God (*'ubudīyat-i muṭlaqah*). The station of infallibility (*'iṣmah*) was bestowed upon them, and God-given knowledge, and they became the embodiment of Divine Names and Attributes. These are all contained in their *wilāyah.* It is for these reasons that in some narrations acknowledging their *wilāyah* and clinging to it is recognized as a good deed (*ḥasanah*) and rejecting it as an evil deed (*sayyi'ah*). Even if a person is far removed from the station of *wilāyah*, acknowledging the *wilāyah* of the *Ahl al-Bayt* will be a source of felicity and spiritual nourishment for him. Knowing about *wilāyah* creates attraction to and identification with it, and this in turn leads to further search and eventual attraction towards and connection to *wilāyah.*

The relationship between a subordinate and his superior is subject to obedience and love. Like a magnet, love attracts the lover and the beloved to each other. It is for this reason that on the Day of Resurrection each group of people will join their [beloved] leader who will lead them to heaven or hell, as the Qur'an says about the Pharaoh: *"He shall go before his people on the Day of Resurrection, and will have led them down to the*

Fire-evil the watering-place to be led down to![482] Those who acknowledge and love the *wilāyah* of Imām ʿAli will follow him to heaven by virtue of their love for and obedience to him, even though they did not reach the station of *wilāyah* in the world despite their struggle.

The Commander of the Faithful and his immaculate children are cleansed from all impurities, appetite, and corruption caused by satanic desires. Anything that originates from such immaculate and sacred souls is pure. It is impossible to expect evil from them; as it is said in a Persian proverb, "A pitcher pours out what it contains." A pitcher that is filled with rose water will give out nothing other than rose water. The substance of the souls of the infallible progeny of the Prophet is pure. They have traversed through and experienced the stations of [God's] Beauty and Majesty. Therefore, they are immune from fear and swooning and the blowing of the trumpet, and death and Resurrection, for they have already been annihilated in God and found subsistence in Him. God did not ordain fear and swooning for them.

Love of the progeny of the Prophet and following their example indicate, in a mysterious way, a kind of union with them. He whose heart is filled with the love of the *Ahl al-Bayt* follows their example and traverses on the same path. Such a person must have already possessed some degree of purity of soul in order to step onto such a path. The degree of knowledge of a Gnostic depends on the extent of his love for and obedience to the subject of love. As Mullā Ṣadrā has said, "A thing cannot know another thing unless there is some of it in it (*Lā yaʿrifu shayʾun shayʾan illā bi mā huwa fīhi minhu*)." No matter how small the light of this love may be, it can remove the darkness from the heart, and ultimately, the rays of light will be united with the source of light.

[482] Qur'an 11: 98.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Fourth Discourse

The Purified [by God] Survive the Blowing of the Trumpet

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *For the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills.*[483]

> *On the day the Trumpet is blown, and terrified is whosoever is in the heavens and earth, excepting whom God wills.*[484]

These two verses indicate that death is a certainty for all beings in heaven and earth. However, there are some people who by the will of God do not experience trepidation (*faza'*) and swooning (*ṣa'aqah*), although death and annihilation are ordained to all creatures, including the righteous and those angels brought nigh to God. There are those who possess certain qualities by virtue of which they do not experience annihilation and death. Indeed, this is the sacred station that God out of His mercy has bestowed upon some of His creatures. God-like qualities differentiate them from other beings and give them superiority over others. Thus, their station is very high and exalted, as the Noble Qur'an says: "*All things perish, except His Face.*"[485]

According to this verse only the Face of God is immune from annihilation and death: "*All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.*[486]

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[483] Qur'an 39: 68.
[484] Qur'an 27: 87.
[485] Qur'an 28: 88.
[486] Qur'an 55: 25–27.

Here, the "*Face of thy Lord*," which is the Face of God, Majestic and Splendid, is emphasized as immune from annihilation and death. The attribute of Splendor denotes divine Generosity, which is a name of Beauty (Jamāl) as it stands juxtaposed to His Name of Majesty and Grandeur (Jalāl): "*Blessed be the Name of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.*"[487]

Now, if we examine the two verses mentioned above that relate to the blowing of the trumpet, it becomes clear that all creatures except whom God wills will experience annihilation and death. Since in other verses in chapters 28 and 55, only "*the Face of God*" and "*whom He wills*" are exempted from annihilation, we can conclude without a doubt that "*whom God wills*" denotes the "*Face of God.*"

As we mentioned in our previous discussion and as discussed in the Qur'an (37: 127–128) it becomes clear that the purified ones (*mukhlaṣīn*) are exempted from being present on the Day of Judgment. They are the ones "*whom God wills*" and who will not experience death. Thus, we can conclude that "*the Face of God*" in a sense refers [also] to the purified ones (*mukhlaṣīn*).[488]

In short, the purified servants (*mukhlaṣīn*) who leave this world do not stop in the intermediate world (*barzakh*), and will not attend the Gathering on the Day of Resurrection. Neither call of the trumpets pertains to them, for they have already traversed through these realms, have entered the world above and beyond the intermediate world, the realm of congregation (*ḥashr*) and association (*nashr*), with ordinary servants and reckoning. Indeed, their beings are actualized in the Face of God where there is no death, destruction, or annihilation.

Of course, these stations belong to those sincere servants who "*are purified by God* (*mukhlaṣīn*)" and not to those who *purify themselves for God* (*mukhliṣīn*). The latter group's innermost being is not completely purified, and they continue to struggle against the carnal soul to attain sincerity and annihilation; whereas those who are purified by God have

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487 Qur'an 55: 87.

488 Qur'an 39: 68. See also 37: 127–128.

traversed through all the stations and have attained the station of immaculate purity in their deeds, attributes, and innermost being, and in their essence. They have entered into God's sanctuary and been totally annihilated in God to the extent that they *"...have no power to hurt or profit themselves, no power of death or life or raising up."*[489] They have no [independent] beings to experience the swooning (*ṣa'aqah*) and trepidation (*faza'a*) of death; and they possess nothing of their own to need reckoning. By virtue of the fact that they have given all they had to God, when they die they go directly to the eternal paradise of the Divine Essence and enjoy the blessing of witnessing divine Beauty and Majesty, as the Qur'an says: *"Those shall enter Paradise, therein provided without reckoning."*[490] In short, the states and stations of the *mukhlaṣīn* are beyond comprehension by others, and the intellect of the wise is unable to enjoy the perfume of God's Majesty.

In his book entitled *Tafsir al-ṣaghīr*, Faḍl ibn Ḥasan Ṭabarsī narrated a *ḥadīth* in the chapter known as the "Word of God" (*Kalimat Allah*) about this group of God's servants:

> God says: I provided for my pious servants what is not seen by any eye, not heard by any ear, and not descended on any human heart; what I informed you about is just for him. You can read them in this verse [of the Qur'an] if you wish, "*No souls know what comfort is laid up for them secretly, as a recompense for that they were doing.*[491]

In 'Ali ibn Ahmad 'Āmili's treatise on *The Mysteries of [daily] Prayer* (*Asrār al-ṣalāt*) on the authority of Imām Ṣādiq a *ḥadīth* is narrated whereby the Prophet said, "I do not descend on the heart of my servant until I know that in it there is love

489 Qur'an 25: 3.
490 Qur'an 40: 40.
491 Qur'an 32: 17.

and sincerity to obey Me and seek My countenance. Then I take to myself the conduct of his affairs."[492]

In short, according to the clear injunctions of the Qur'an, those who are purified by God possess the following qualities that others have no share of.

First, Satan does not have authority and dominance over them: "*By Thy glory I shall pervert them all together, excepting those Thy servants among them that are sincere.*"[493] Obviously, this is a legislative (*tashri'i*) exception, but because of the *mukhlaṣīn's* inherent authority in the station of *tawḥīd*, Satan no longer has any power over them. Their being is fully purified for God, and whatever they see, they see God. No matter in what form or state Satan appears to them, they see him with God's eyes. Therefore, Satan, who naturally tempts people, has to surrender before the purified servants.

Second, as we demonstrated before, the *mukhlaṣīn* do not face reckoning on the Day of Judgment, for, as a result of their struggle against the carnal soul, they have traversed through the Greatest Resurrection of the Soul (*Qiyāmat-i 'uzma-yi anfusīyah*) and died to themselves. Since they died on God's path, He has granted them eternal life and they receive sustenance from the divine treasure. To call one to attend a gathering denotes one's absence. The *mukhlaṣīn* have always been present [before God]: "*Count not those who were slain in God's way as dead, but rather living with their Lord, by Him provided.*"[494]

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[492] As quoted in *Kalamat Allah*, p. 138. Zayneddin ibn Ali 'Āmili, known as Shahīd Thānī (911/1506–966/1559), is one of the most eminent Shī'a jurists and scholars. He was born in 911/1506 in Jabal 'Āmil, traveled extensively, and gained recognition as a Source of Emulation (*marja'-i taqlīd*). He wrote over 40 books and treatises, and his most famous book is titled *Ma 'arim al-uṣūl*. He was killed by an Ottoman general named Yusuf Pasha. His other important book was *Rawḍāt al-jinān fī sharḥ-i irshad al-adhan*. He died in 966/1559.

[493] Qur'an 38: 82–83.

[494] Qur'an 3: 169.

Third, on the Day of Judgment rewards and punishments will be in accordance with the deeds of each individual except the purified people, whom God will reward in accordance with His [infinite] generosity and grace, as the Qur'an says:

> *And not be recompensed, except according to what you were doing. Except for God's sincere servants.*[495]

and,

> *Therein they shall have whatever they will; and with Us there is yet more.*[496]

Fourth, they have such an exalted station that they could praise God in the many ways of which He is worthy. *"Glory be to God above that they describe, except for God's sincere servants."*[497] This is the utmost perfection of a servant and the most exalted station.

There are fascinating descriptions of the stations of the purified ones (*mukhlaṣīn*) in the narrations of the Infallible Imāms. Imām Ṣādiq once said,

> God says: My servant cannot demonstrate his love to Me by anything that is loved by Me more than what I obligated (*fara'iḍ*) him to perform. Then, by performing supererogatory prayers (*nawāfil*) he attracts My love. When I love him I become his ear by which he hears, the eye by which he sees, his tongue with which he talks, the hand with which he holds, and the foot with which he walks. Therefore, when he calls upon Me, I respond to him and when he asks Me for something I grant it to him. I do not hesitate to perform any action but when I will to take his life and he dislikes death, I dislike to discomfort him.[498]

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[495] Qur'an 37: 39–40.
[496] Qur'an 50: 35.
[497] Qur'an 37: 159–160.
[498] As quoted in *al-Maḥāsin*, Vol.1, chapter 47, also *Masabih al-dhulam* (*The Lights for Darks*), p.291. Ahmad ibn Khalid Barqī is the author of one

In his *'Uddat al-dā'ī* Ibn Fahad Ḥilli commented on the Sacred *ḥadīth* (*ḥadīth qudsi*) mentioned above and said:

> O son of Adam, I am the rich who does not become poor. Perform what I ordered you, then I will make you one who is rich and does not become poor. O son of Adam, I am the Living who does not die, perform what I ordered you, then I will make you one who is living and does not die. O son of Adam, I say "Be" and it is, perform what I ordered you, then I will make you such as you say "Be" and it is.[499]

And Ḥāfiẓ Rajab Bursi in *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*[500] says: "It is narrated in a holy narration: 'God has some servants who obey God in His will and then God obeys them in their will. They say to something "Be" and it is.'"[501]

Indeed these are the servants purified completely from all impurities and who have no purpose in life except God's pleasure. They transcend this-worldly and other-worldly affairs and have no desire except God. They see the manifestations of God everywhere and "have no will of their own other than what God wills."[502] They do not claim any knowledge, power, or life independent of God. They see God as the only source of life.

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of the most authoritative sources on Shī'a *Ḥadīth* titled *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, edited by Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥusayni, Qom, 1370/2001.

[499] Ibn Fahd Ḥillī (757–841/1356–1438), one of the most eminent Shī'a scholars, is the author of *'Uddat al-dā'i*, one of the most valuable sources on ethics that the Shaykh wrote. His other famous book is *al-Taḥṣīn fī ṣifāt al-'ārifīn* on the issues of solitude and contains sayings of the Household of the Prophet. See *al-Dharī'ah* 15: 228.

[500] Ḥāfiẓ [of the Qur'ān] Shaykh Raḍī al-Dīn Rajab ibn Muhammad ibn Rajab al-Bursī al-Ḥillī (d. 813 or 815/1410 or 1412) was a well-known Shī'ite scholar and Gnostic of the 9th/15th century and a master in the science of *ḥadīth*, literature, and the science of numbers (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*). He wrote important books on different aspects and realities of *wilayāh* such as *Mashāriq al-anwār al-yaqīn*, *al-Durar al-thamīn*, *Asrār al-a'immah*, *Faḍa'il-i amīr al-mu'minīn*, *Lawāmi' al-anwār al-tamjīd*, and a book of poetry in praise of the Household of the Prophet. In his book *al-Ghadīr*, 'Allāmah Amīnī, has recorded his biography in detail. See p. 122, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, 3: 337–345, and *al-Ghadīr*, 7: 33–68.

[501] "Kalimah Allah" (the Word of God), p. 143.

[502] Qur'an 76: 3.

knowledge, and power. They have set aside all other claims before God and are ashamed to claim any attributes of their own. Sa'dī, the Persian poet, so appropriately explained this station in the following terms.

> The path of reason is but an entangled web
> for the Gnostics (*'ārifān*) nothing exists but God
> Whatever that exists is less than what He is
> Who can claim existence while He [alone] exists
> If the Majestic King of the universe manifests His existence
> The universe will disappear to nothingness altogether

By the grace of their presence on earth God relieves the evil-doers and the sinful on earth from punishment. In a narration, Imām Bāqir once said,

> In the original and undistorted copy of the Torah it is mentioned that once Moses asked God: "O Lord, are You close to me so that I could whisper, or are You far from me so that I call you in loud voice?"
>
> God revealed to him: "O Moses, I am the companion of him who remembers me."
>
> Then Moses said: "Who will be protected by You the day that there is no protection except Yours?"
>
> God answered: "[On that day] I will remember whoever remembers me and will love whoever loves me. They are who I remember when I want to punish the people of the earth because of their evil deeds, but then I halt their punishment for the sake of them."[503]

A *ḥadīth* is recorded in *'Uddat al-dā'i* from the Holy Prophet, who said,

> Almighty God says: when I know that My servant's mind is preoccupied with Me, I will direct his worldly desires to ask Me and pray to Me, then if he wants to commit an error I will

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[503] Kulaynī, *Uṣūl kafi*, Vol. 2, p. 496.

not allow it to happen. These are my true friends (*awliyā'*). They are truly courageous heroes (*abṭāl*). For their sake I spare sinful people of the earth from punishment.[504]

In the same book two Sacred Traditions are recorded whereby God says, "Whenever I know that my remembrance is in my servant's heart, I will take charge of his affairs and become his companion, his party in conversation, and his intimate companion."[505]

In the second *ḥadīth* God addresses David in the following terms, "O David, My remembrance is for those who remember, My paradise for the obedient servants, My love to those who long for Me, [But] I [Myself] am for those who love Me.[506]

The brief description of the traits and attributes of the purified people (*mukhlāṣin*) indicates that in all affairs God is their Protecting Friend and Trustee, for they have transcended beyond all human traits such as appetite and love for wealth and status, and all other stations. They live and act in God's name and find subsistence in Him, Majestic and Glorious. They live eternally in God. On the day that the universe is rolled up and returned to its original form, what remains is God's countenance, and those purified by God are His countenance and therefore do not perish: *"On the day when We shall roll up heaven as a scroll is rolled for the writings; as We originated the first creation."*[507] *"And the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand."*[508]

In reality God's Face is everywhere. The entire created world, from the point of view of its connection to God, is His Face. God's Face encompasses the world of the Kingdom (*mulk*) and of Dominion (*malakūt*). There is not a single particle, unless God's Sacred Being accompanies that particle: *"To God*

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[504] Ibn Fahd Ḥilli, *Uddat al-dāi'i*, p. 183.
[505] Ibid., p. 184.
[506] Ibid., p. 186.
[507] Qur'an 21: 64.
[508] Qur'an 39: 67.

belongs the East and the West; whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God."[509]

Although in their physical forms these Friends of God (*awliyā'*) appear in the same form that we see, the reality of their being—which is the Face of God—is all-encompassing and dominates over the world of the Kingdom and the Dominion. They are present everywhere, and nothing is hidden from them, because they have transcended the particular and have joined the Universal, passing the limitations of time and space and seeing the world from the widest angle.

This is the ground for the prophets' miracles and infallible Imāms' miraculous and wondrous acts (*karāmāt*).[510] By virtue of the expansion of their being they are able to perform actions beyond the ability of ordinary people, who are like prisoners in this world—acts that are out of the realm of imagination of thinkers. How can ordinary people, who are confined in the realm of matter and nature, know the mysteries of the Prophets and Infallibles? We know that the knowledge and power and all other attributes that emanate from them are all-encompassing and universal [as the Qur'an says]:

> *And faces shall be humbled unto the Living, the Eternal. He will have failed whose burden is of evildoing.*[511]

> *And they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His Throne comprises the heavens and earth.*[512]

The Friends of God become liberated of all desires and adorned with God-like qualities and attributes. Like a clean mirror they reflect the Beauty and Majesty of God. They have access to all knowledge that God wills and are able to do what

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[509] Qur'an 2: 115.

[510] In Islam miracles belong to the prophets. The supernatural events that occur by Imāms and *awliyā'* (the Friends of God) are called *karāmāt*.

[511] Qur'an 20: 115.

[512] Qur'an 2: 255.

God wills. There is no obstacle in time and space and in the world of nature that stands in their way.

When the Commander of the Faithful (Imām ʿAli) was struck with a sword and injured, he said, "I was your neighbor and for a short while my body lived as your neighbor."[513] In other words, the reality of his being was not accessible to the people. That is the reason that miraculous acts that in some treatises are attributed to ʿAli must not be denied or considered extraordinary. These acts indeed correspond to and are in harmony with philosophical and spiritual principles as well as principles of religion. These affairs indeed must be left to those who have the knowledge to understand them, as it is said:

> How could a mosquito know whom the garden belongs to,
> For it is born in the spring and dies in winter.[514]

The punctuality of the prophets and Imāms in observing their religious duties was all for this purpose, for these duties are the way to attain piety and purity of the inward and adornment with God-like qualities. Of course, their emphasis on the importance of the purification of the soul and attainment of virtues was to reach the station of perfect servanthood. Action must always be accompanied with sincerity and purity of intention; otherwise, mere performance of these duties unto themselves would not be a source of grace, as the Qur'an says: *"So let him, who hopes for the encounter with his Lord, work righteousness, and not associate with his Lord's service anyone.*[515]

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[513] *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon 147, edited by Abduh in Egypt, Vol. 1, p.269.

[514] Rumi, Mathnawī, II

پشه کی داند که این باغ از کی است
کو بهاران زاد و مرگش در دی است

[515] Qur'an 18: 110.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Fifth Discourse

Prophets and Imāms: The Embodiments of God's Most Beautiful Names

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.*[516]

The holy Qur'an divides human beings into three categories: the Companions of the Right hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*); the Companions of the Left Hand (*aṣḥāb shemāl*); and those who are brought nigh to God (*muqarrabīn*). The Companions of the left are the transgressors and deviants, such as the atheists, polytheists, and hypocrites. The Companions of the Right are people of faith and beautiful deeds. Those who are brought nigh to God—also called "the foremost" (*al-sābiqūn*) in the Qur'an—are those who transcend the station of the Companions of the Right, and their innermost beings are purified completely. They are those whose being is completely annihilated in God, and God's Will has replaced theirs. Therefore, their will has become identical to God's Will.

It may seem that those who are brought nigh to God are the same people who are purified by God (*mukhlaṣīn*) and who have been exempted from death. This is a metaphorical statement. In reality such an exemption is not possible, for every being possesses a soul and will die. There are no exceptions in death. However, the *mukhlaṣīn*, in a sense, do not own their souls, for they have realized intuitively that their souls do not belong to them, but belong to God. God's Names and Attributes are manifested in the swooning (*ṣa'aqah*) of their souls. Since such manifestations are universal and all-encompassing, these people

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[516] Qur'an 55: 26–27.

transcend the limitations of the world of nature, form, corporeality, and the soul, reaching beyond earth and heaven. They live in God's glory, free of all veils, corporeality, and identity, and are fully annihilated in God's Names and Attributes. They do not die because they are the Face of God (*wajhu'llah*) and *"All things perish, except His Face, majestic, splendid."*[517]

God's Names and Attributes exist in the entification of His Inclusive Unity (*Wāhidīyah*). In His Exclusive Unity (*Ahadīyah*) He is free from all kinds of entification. That is the domain where no name and attribute exists. The state of His Exclusive Unity (*Ahadīyah*) is above and beyond Names and Attributes. Thus, the Attributes of Glory and Majesty mentioned in the above verse manifest only in His most beautiful Names (*asmā al-Ḥusnā*).[518] It is narrated that in reference to this verse Imām Ṣādiq said, "By God! We are God's most beautiful Names. God does not accept anything from people except through knowing us."[519]

It is stated in *Basā'ir al-darajāt*" that Imām Bāqir said,

> The Supreme name of God is composed of 73 letters. Asif ibn Barkhia learned only one letter and when he uttered that the distance between him and the throne of Bilqays (Shibā) disappeared. When he held the throne and put it in front of Solomon, the distance reappeared in a blink of an eye. We know 72 of the letters of the Supreme Name. One of those names is known by God alone and it pertains to His knowledge of the invisible world. *"There is no power nor strength save in God, Exalted and Majestic is He"* (*lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bil'Lāh al-'Alī al-'Aẓīm*).[520]

These narrations alongside others—most of which are mentioned in the chapter on *Hujjah* in the *Usūl kāfi*—mean that the reality of the Divine Names, such as the All-Knowing, All-

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[517] Qur'an 28: 88.
[518] Qur'an 7: 180: *"To God belong the Names Most Beautiful; so call Him by them."*
[519] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 8, pp. 382 and 184.
[520] Ibid.

Powerful, and the Most Compassionate, the Self-Existing (al-Qayyūm) the Most Merciful, the Clement (al-Ra'ūf), and the like can be known only through these honorable Infallible Imāms because their beings are annihilated in God. Therefore, they are the Face of God, and wherever we look in the existentiated world, they are there and we see them; for "*whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God.*"[521] The reason for this conclusion is that no being in the worlds of the Kingdom (*mulk*) and the Dominion (*malakut*) comes into existence unless it carries with itself aspects of God. That is what connects every being to God. If there is no Face of God in all things, nothing will exist. Hence the narrations that denote that "*if the Proof of God does not exist [on earth], then the earth will swallow its inhabitants.*"[522] Therefore, as mentioned in the verse related to the *Blowing of the Trumpet*, the reason that everything will perish except whom God wills is not accidental or a contingency (*i'tebarī*), but an exalted existential reality, because how would God make His own Face perish?

These honorable beings are the arbitrators and judges and decide who deserves paradise and who merits hell. They stay at *a'rāf*[523] and dominate over paradise and hell. Abraham is among those who have reached the station of the Image of God (*wajhul'lah*). That exalted prophet who is the patriarch and founder of monotheistic religions is superior to all messengers of God except the Prophet of Islam: "*So We were showing Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those having sure faith.*"[524] When God revived the dead with the hand of Abraham it was by virtue of possessing the quality of "the Face of God" and the "Giver of Life (al-Muḥyī) that God bestowed upon him. Any of the Divine Names and Attributes that is actualized in a person will be manifested in the outside world with God's permission. The Qur'an

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[521] Qur'an 2: 115.
[522] *Uṣūl al-kāfi*, Vol. 1, pp. 178 and 179.
[523] We will discuss it in the section "A'raf" in detail.
[524] Qur'an 6: 75.

explicitly quotes Jesus regarding his ability to give life to the dead and sight to the blind, and to heal the leper because God gave him the permission: *"I will also heal the blind and the leper, and bring to life the dead, by the leave of God."*[525]

There are two different stories in the Qur'an. In the first Abraham asked God to show him how He gave life to the dead. God performed it by the hand of Abraham by bestowing upon him His name al-Muḥyī (Giver of Life). According to the second story Jeremiah (Irmiyah) asked the same thing from God, but God performed it by Himself while Jeremiah only watched the event, as the following verse states:

> *Or such as he who passed by a city that was fallen down upon its turrets; he said, "How shall God give life to this now that it is dead?" So God made him die a hundred years, then He raised him up, saying, "How long hast thou tarried?" He said, "I have tarried a day, or part of a day." Said He, "Nay; thou hast tarried a hundred years."*[526]

These two stories suggest two different requests originating from two distinct spiritual stations. God narrates in the Qur'an first the story of Jeremiah and then of Abraham to show the high station of Abraham. Jeremiah is also a prophet who called people to God's Oneness. They are both infallible; however, they have different stations.

> *Or such as he who passed by a city that was fallen down upon its turrets; he said, "How shall God give life to this now it is dead?" So God made him die a hundred years, then He raised him up, saying, "How long hast thou tarried?" He said, "I have tarried a day, or part of a day." Said He, "Nay; thou hast tarried a hundred years. Look at thy food and drink—it has not spoiled; and look at thy ass. So We would make thee a sign for the people. And look at the bones; how We shall set them up, and then clothe them with flesh." So,*

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[525] Qur'an 3: 49.
[526] Qur'an 2: 259.

when it was made clear to him, he said, "I know that God is powerful over everything."[527]

When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and its vicinity and killed 70,000 people, Jeremiah[528] was passing by a village. Looking at the buildings destroyed and the bodies decomposed, he exclaimed, *"How shall God give this township life after its death?"*[529]

Since Jeremiah was a prophet, obviously he did not deny Resurrection. What is important is that he was bewildered for two reasons. One was over how God would revive and return to original shape the bones that had been decomposed; and the other was over the long time that shall have passed from the moment of their death to the Day of Resurrection. While he was contemplating this, God *"took his life for a hundred years, and took the life of his ass as well."* Then He raised him from death saying, *"How long hast thou tarried?"* He said, *"I have tarried a day, or part of a day."* Said He, *"Nay; thou hast tarried a hundred years."* Jeremiah believed it was for one day or even less than that. God revealed to him that he was dead for one hundred years and said, *"Look at thy food and drink—it has not spoiled."* Then God said, *"And look at thy ass. So We would make thee a sign for the people. And look at the bones; how We shall set them up, and then clothe them with flesh."*[530]

It seems that Jeremiah's eye was the first organ that was brought back to life. He saw how God gathered the different parts of the donkey's body and how it finally stood up. Then, he saw his own revival. So, God responded to the two questions of Jeremiah—namely, by gathering the dispersed and decomposed elements of a body and showing the unspoiled food—and made it an example for all people. When Jeremiah saw the process he realized that God has power over everything. He had the

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[527] Qur'an 2: 259.
[528] Some unauthorized *ḥadīths* discussed this story related to Esdras (Uzayr), but it is about Jeremiah (Irmiyah).
[529] Qur'an 2: 259.
[530] Ibid.

knowledge of all these before, but then it became realized knowledge, and he attained certainty and said, "*I know now that God is powerful over everything.*"[531]

As to Abraham, he wanted to know the ways in which God applied His power to give life to the dead. Unlike Jeremiah he did not question the possibility of Resurrection, as the Qur'an says:

> *And when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how Thou wilt give life to the dead," He said, "Why, dost thou not believe?" "Yes," he said, "but that my heart may be at rest." Said He, "Take four birds, and twist them to thee, then set a part of them on every hill, then summon them, and they will come to thee running. And do thou know that God is All-mighty, All-wise."*[532]

This is the difference between Jeremiah and Abraham, that is, one questioning the possibility of an event and the other asking for the ways in which that event takes place. The first merely inquires about the possibility and the second requires the details of the process. God asked whether Abraham believed in it, and Abraham responded that he believed, but he wished to attain certainty. "*And when Abraham said, 'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead,' He said, 'Dost thou not believe?' Abraham said, 'Yes, but I ask in order that my heart may attain certainty.'*"[533]

There are some monotheists who believe in the Oneness of God but their hearts are not certain. They are in a constant state of anxiety and doubt although they are immersed in the ocean of divine Oneness (*tawḥīd*). Although Abraham was certain, he wanted to reach a station where anxiety would disappear from his heart. He wished to have his knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) and his witnessing of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*) be actualized in the truth of certainty (*Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).

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[531] Ibid.
[532] Qur'an 2: 260.
[533] Qur'an 2: 260.

God commanded Abraham to take four birds, keep them so that they became attached to you, and then kill them, chop them into little pieces, and mix them together and spread them over the mountains. Then call each bird by its name, and you will see that each bird will come to you at great speed. Abraham had to know that God was All-Mighty and All-Wise. He picked up a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon, and a hen[534] and did as he was commanded. Then, he called the birds to come to him. In such a state Abraham was not acting as an ordinary man. He was totally annihilated in God and had been given all God's qualities of the All-Mighty, All-Wise, All-Powerful, and the Giver of Life. Indeed at such moments it was not Abraham, but God who acted as he saw all parts of the birds coming from over the mountains at a great speed. All birds appeared in the same manner before him. All these events occurred by the hand of Abraham and with God's permission. Indeed, Abraham made the resurrection of the birds with God's permission, whereas Jeremiah only watched God's function because God commanded him just to "observe."

Therefore, if you hear that the Commander of the Faithful (Amir al-Mumenīn) revived a dead man, do not be surprised, because he actualized the Name of God within him. Many similar stories that are related to the seventh Imām, Musā ibn Ja'far, and to Imām 'Ali ibn Musā al-Riḍā are of this nature.[535]

The illustrious Ayatullah Ḥajj Mirzā Javād Anṣārī Hamadāni, who was a foremost authority in knowledge, narrates the following story:

> I had an old and honorable friend from Ḥamadān. He narrated that he "spent more than 20 years with scholars and people of gnosis but did not gain much." He began to doubt about the miraculous acts (*karamāt*), acts attributed to the [Infallible] Imāms, and thought they were distorted historical stories. Once, he went to make a pilgrimage to the holy

[534] *Tafsir-e Qumī*, lithograph edition, p. 81.
[535] The first story is in Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manāqib-i 'Ali Abī Ṭālib*, lithograph edition, p. 364; the second story is in *'Uyon al-Akhbar Imām Riza*, lithograph, chapter 40, p. 345.

shrines in Iraq. As he completed his rituals in the Mosque of Kufa, he came out and waited for transportation to return to Najaf. A humble man carrying a backpack came to him and suggested taking a walk. He joined him. Without any introduction the stranger turned to him and said, "Sir, what you say about the impossibility of miraculous acts [by the Imāms] is not true." My friend responded by saying that he did not believe because he had heard a lot but had never seen any sign of them.

My friend continued to argue until the man asked him what would make him believe in miraculous acts by the Imāms. My friend said if a person can give life to the dead, then he will believe in all miracles. The stranger stood up, pointed to a place where there was a dead pigeon, and asked my friend to take the dead pigeon and bring it to him. He did this, and then the stranger said to look carefully and determine if it was dead. My friend confirmed it, because he saw some of its feathers were lost. The stranger said if he gave life to that bird, then would he believe? My friend said, of course, and then he will believe in all prophets' miracles and Imāms' *karamāt*. The stranger took the pigeon in his hand, looked at it deeply, prayed, and then said to the pigeon, "Fly by the permission of God." The pigeon flew away and left.

My friend was shocked and mesmerized. The stranger asked him if he believed in the possibility of miraculous acts [by the Imāms]. He added, "This I did by God's permission, but these acts are like childish games of school-children. The Prophet and Imāms did not come to perform such childish acts, although they could have done so only by God's permission. They could have shown such miraculous acts if God ordained, but only with His permission, without which they could not do a thing."

The two men moved towards Najaf while my friend was in a state of shock. While talking together they finally arrived in Najaf. When the stranger wanted to say goodbye, my friend asked him to allow him to accompany him. He said, "tomorrow early in the morning, come to Wadī al-Salaam [the most famous cemetery in Najaf] and we will then meet

> there." Early next morning my friend went to Wādi al-Salām and saw some people preparing for a funeral. He realized that the funeral was for the same man that he was supposed to meet.

This is not just a story. It is related to our time. narrated by the late Anṣārī. who died only 17 years ago and in our time was like Salmān. the eminent Persian companion of the Prophet.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Sixth Discourse

The Meaning of the "Face of God" and the Face of Other Beings

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.*[536]

The world of creation consists of the outward and the inward dimensions. Its outward aspect includes multiplicity of material and physical phenomena, each of which has its own identity. Every phenomenon has its share of existence, knowledge, and power in accordance with its existential status. These various entities define themselves as the center of life and a criterion for values. Therefore, they uphold themselves and invite people to themselves. When each phenomenon notices its own imperfection, it clings to others in order to remove imperfections from itself and does anything to avoid harms and protect its interests, even if in the process it may cause harm to others. These entities have their own special identities and are different from one another, and protect their identities and independence.

The inward aspect of the created world is a "pure connection" between these creatures and the detached realms of Divine Names (*lāhūt*) and Divine Invincibility (*Jabarūt*) and ultimately with God, the source of the emanation of its knowledge, power, and life. [It is this connection] that keeps the garden of these entities lively and fresh. If this connection were severed for a single moment, this world would collapse and be destroyed. The outward aspect of the world of creation is called

[536] Qur'an 55: 26–27.

the face of creation (*wajh-i khilqat*), while its inward aspect is referred to as the Face of God (*wjhu 'llāh*).

The face (*wajh*) of a thing symbolizes the nature of that thing. For example, the face of a man is the most important of one's physical being, and represents his nature and differentiates one thing from another. In other words, the face of one thing is different from another, for each one was created with its unique face. However, the Face of God, who is the cause of creation, is One, because God is One. Therefore, knowledge, power, and life that emanate from Him are one and the way in which they connect to God is also one.

Although different beings possess various levels of life, knowledge, and power, God's Knowledge and Power and His Life-Giving Quality are not different when He creates things. He applies His Life, Knowledge, and Power the same way for all of them. In other words, God did not apply more of His Power to create the sun than to create a small planet. The same story is true about the creation of Mount Damavand or a little rock and an elephant or a mosquito. Similarly, He did not use more power to create the poorest man or animal or the noblest and most exalted human being of the contingent world, namely Prophet Muhammad. Divine Power, Knowledge, and other Attributes are one and are applied in the same way to all beings. In God's realm there is no quality and quantity, less or more, or time and space, as the Qur'an says:

> *Our commandment is but one word, as the twinkling of an eye.*[537]

and,

> *And the matter of the Hour is as a twinkling of the eye, or nearer.*[538]

In the realm of created things, however, differences and multiplicities appear. They originate from the diversity of their

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[537] Qur'an 54: 50.
[538] Qur'an 16: 77.

potentialities and their quiddities; therein reside the sources of their richness and poorness, their lesser and greater size, and their limitation to space and time. This aspect of God's being is called the Image of God (*wajhu'llah*) and that of the created being is called the image of creation (*wajh al-khalq*)

Other names for the Image of God are the world of Dominance, the Unseen (*ghayb*), the Inward (*bāṭin*), and the world of Command (*'ālam-i Amr*). The world of creation is also called the world of the Kingdom, witnessing, and the outward (*ẓāhir*), as defined by Qur'anic verses such as:

> *Verily, His are the creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of all Being.*[539]

> *So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything.*[540]

> *He is Knower of the Unseen and the visible.*[541]

In short, multiplicity of beings and differences among them belong to the contingent world, each being in a sense a sign of God and a mirror that reflects His Beauty. Yet their multiplicity also is one insofar as it reflects only One Being. This is the example of a person who is standing in a room in front of several mirrors. All those mirrors reflect only the same person, but from different angles.

The world of Command, which is the Image of God and His Lordship of all beings, is also One. The multiplicity and diversity originate from the unlimited number of mirrors. Destruction and death belong to the image of creation in the world of nature (*'ālam-i ṭab'*) because the foundation of the world of nature is based on [constant] change and transformation. Death and renewal are in the nature of this world. The divine image of the world does not lend itself to

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[539] Qur'an 7: 54.
[540] Qur'an 36: 83.
[541] Qur'an 6: 73 (this is repeated in nine more verses).

change and death because it is not material, and therefore is not subject to change and corruption, space and time, quality and quantity, and other accidents. It is simple, transcendent, and the pure connection, and as the Qur'an says, *"All things perish, except His Face"*;[542] that is to say, every thing will perish except that which is permanent, simple, and detached, and has connectivity.

Thus the meaning of *"whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God"*[543] becomes clear, because the Image of God denotes the connection of all beings to Him. Therefore, God's Image, which is simple, detached, and One is present in every thing. In his supplication Imām Sajjād would utter, "Oh God! I call You in my supplication [knowing] You are everywhere hoping that you hear my call."[544]

We can thus conclude that the created image of every thing is subject to death and perishing and only God's Image is permanent. Therefore, the *"blowing of the trumpet"* affects those things that did not lose their created aspect, causing their death. Those beings in whom the Image of God is actualized and who are annihilated in God are not subject to death and destruction. One of the titles of the Twelfth Imām, Imām Muhammad Ibn al-Hassan al-Askarī is God's Image (*wajh'llāh*), as one recites in a prayer performed at his pilgrimage, "Peace be on the Image of God who is known for His servants."[545] Also, we recite in the Nudbah prayer, "Where is the Image of God, to whom the friends of God would turn?"[546] In a narration Imām Ṣādiq dismissed the existence of physical attributes, such as face and organs, with regard to God by stating, "The Image of God is His prophets and friends."[547]

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[542] Qur'an 28: 88.
[543] Qur'an 2: 115.
[544] *Mushal al-mutahajjid*, lithograph edition, p. 116.
[545] *Naj al-thaqib*, lithograph edition, Laqb 175, p. 46.
[546] Sayed Ibn Tawus, *Meshah al-zair*, as a part of Duas related to Sardab-e Muttahar.
[547] *Safinah al-bihār*, Vol. 2, p. 635.

Those in whom the Image of God is actualized are always in His presence, and nothing can distance them from God. It is said, "the Beloved has manifested Himself in all Images so I witnessed Him in all meanings and forms."[548] And Ibn Fārid said,

> He revealed Himself before my eye
> in all His manifestations in the world of existence
> So in all things that can be seen
> I see it by seeing Him in it.[549]

How eloquently Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī explained this experience in his poem,

> Noah said, "O ye headstrong ones, I am not I: I am dead to the (animal) soul, I am living through the Soul of souls. Inasmuch as I am dead to the senses of the father of mankind (human senses), God has become my hearing and perception and sight. Since I am not I, this breath (of mine) is from Him: in the presence of this breath if any one breathes (a word) he is an infidel." In the form of this fox there is the lion: 'tis not fitting to advance boldly towards this fox. Unless thou believe in him from his exterior aspect (accept him in the form in which he appears), thou wilt not hear from him the lions' roar. If Noah had not been the Eternal Lion, why should he have cast a whole world into confusion?[550]

It is narrated from the Prophet, "If you go down to the lowest part of the earth, you will still fall down to God."[551] Imām Sajjād's supplication that we mentioned before, "Oh God! I call You in my supplication hoping that you hear my call, [knowing] You are everywhere," is indeed another variation of this *ḥadīth*. The Image of God is present in every single thing, even at the deepest parts of the earth.

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548 As quoted in Shaykh Ibraham Dasuqi, see Sh'arani, *Tabaqat al-shuara*, Vol. 1, p. 182.
549 Ibn Fariz, *Diwān*, p. 66.
550 Rūmī, Translated by Nicholson, 1:3124–3129.
551 Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī, *Asfār arba'ah*, Vol. 1, p. 114.

As I discussed previously, there is no death nor Resurrection for God's friends who are brought nigh to him and are purified by Him. They do not experience the same kind of afflictions and difficulties that others have to go through, nor do they swoon or die and resurrect when the trumpet is blown and anything that goes in between the two blowings of the trumpet. The purified servants of God are exempt from these trials and tribulations because they experienced these hard times in this world by struggling against their carnal soul (*nafs*). They enter paradise purified and enjoy the unlimited bounties of God and join the company of virtuous and good people.

Traversing through these routes is inevitable because reaching the station of "Resurrection of the Soul" (*Qiyāmat-i anfusīyah*) is a fundamental necessity that could not be attained except by going through the previous stations. Otherwise, it would require skipping those stations, and that is not possible Therefore, it is more appropriate to traverse through these paths by the grace of God and man's resolve and spiritual will, by engaging in spiritual struggle against the carnal soul, which is the greatest *jihād* (*jihād al-akbar*), like the struggle of those who were brought nigh to God (*muqarrabīn*), those purified by God (*mukhlaṣīn*), and the Foremost (*al-Sabiqūn*). Otherwise, before and after death man would have to traverse through these hardships in one way or another. A self-centered and proud man whose eyes are afflicted with pain and inflammation (*ramad*) must surrender himself to God and accept his servanthood: *"None is there in the heavens and earth but he comes to the All-merciful as a servant; He has indeed counted them, and He has numbered them exactly. Every one of them shall come to Him upon the Day of Resurrection, all alone.*[552]

The Qur'anic verses explain very well these states, saying:

> *Upon the day when the first blast shivers and the second blast follows it, hearts upon that day shall be athrob and their eyes shall be humbled. They shall say, "What, are we being restored as we were before? What, when we are bones*

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[552] Qur'an 19: 93–95.

> *old and wasted?" They shall say, "That then is a losing return!" But it shall be only a single scare, and behold, they are awakened."*[553]

and,

> *When heaven is rent asunder and gives ear to its Lord, and is fitly disposed; when earth is stretched out and casts forth what is in it, and voids itself, and gives ear to its Lord, and is fitly disposed! O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him.*[554]

> *But when the sight is dazed and the moon is eclipsed, and the sun and moon are brought together, upon that day man shall say, "Whither to flee?" No indeed; not a refuge! Upon that day the recourse shall be to thy Lord. Upon that day man shall be told his former deeds and his latter; nay, man shall be a clear proof against himself, even though he offer his excuses.*[555]

Indeed, the Friends of God are free from all these stations because they have already traversed through them in the world. They have transcended the stations wherein the sun is folded up, the moon is eclipsed, and the earth is stretched out. How can these people have passed through such stations if these events are to happen in the Hereafter? To clarify this point, further explanation is in order.

As human being we possess a physical body and live in the material world. We also have a mind that is the repository of our thoughts and memories. The mind leads the body by calculating the advantages and disadvantages of each action. In addition, we have a personal identity, a "self." The mind dominates our body and the "self" dominates both our body and mind. They are not separate and the self cannot be considered an independent entity within us or extraneous to us. The imaginal

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[553] Qur'an 79: 6–14.
[554] Qur'an 84: 1–6, also see the first verses of "The Darkening" (Chapter 81) and "The Splitting" (chapter 82).
[555] Qur'an 75: 7–15.

world and the world of Resurrection (*'ālam-i Qiyāmat*) also have the same relationship with this world. The intermediate world is neither within this world nor a world out there. It is not 50.000 or 100.000 years later; the intermediate and Resurrection worlds are in existence here and now, encompassing this world. In other words, this world is within the intermediate world and the latter is inside the world of Resurrection, not like different layers of an onion, because its layers all are of the same genus and matter. Rather, it is like the disentangled encompassing the form and matter. The disentangled world is not an accident [imposed on] form and matter. It is not an accidental being. It does not mean that we will reach the intermediate world 100 years from this moment, and 100 years after that, the world of Resurrection. Such a move is indeed accidental, whereas in the hierarchical order the movement is from below towards higher realms, from the horizontal to the disentangled vertical realms. Such a movement does not necessitate traversing in time and space but in the soul and its states and stations.

The Qur'anic verses about such physical events as the swooning, the earthquake, and the eclipse of the sun and moon are merely events that warn people of their entering into the intermediate world. It is through observing these events that man perceives of the intermediate world and realizes that he enters into that realm. In other words, such events do not denote that the intermediate world does not exist right now and will appear later. Since the awareness of these affairs comes after voluntary or obligatory death, it is said that the intermediate world will come after this world. Rather, it means that such a world will be perceived by man only *after* death. The intermediate world exists right now but we can only know it when we experience death. It is like a prize that is provided for a child but will be presented to him only when the child passes his exam. It is present but not given yet.

There are several narrations that denote that man's deeds, whether good or evil, find existence in the intermediate world and the world of Resurrection while we commit that action. They are saved for us in the realm of God's knowledge—and

find entification in the intermediate and Resurrection worlds to hunt or save man after death. Indeed, man's deeds are entified and returned to him after he experiences death. They are known and visible in their material form to everyone in this world but their forms in the intermediate world and the world of Resurrection are veiled from him and will become known and visible when the veils are removed. Like a person who becomes unconscious and does not feel the pain of surgery when he goes through a surgery and discovers the procedures later, those who are preoccupied with their desires burn in the fire of selfishness and pride but do not perceive that they are burning.

The great masters have said dominance of those people who are drunk with the pleasure of desires and appetites do not perceive, because they cannot see nor hear anything else, much less the burning fire of hell. As stated in the *ḥadīth*, "The love of a thing makes man deaf and dumb." He can understand what happened to him only when drunkenness disappears, and his eyes are opened to the reality of his state.

The purified servants of God (*mukhlaṣīn*), who are the image of God, unveil the intermediate world and the world of Resurrection in this world. By doing good deeds and struggling against the carnal soul, they transcend time and space. They experience the blowing of the trumpet and traverse through the intermediate world, entering the world of Resurrection. They accept voluntary death and enter a realm above and beyond the world of the soul beyond time and space. The events of the past, present, and future are all unveiled for them and known to them. They have knowledge of all catastrophic events. They possess the knowledge of the foremost and are aware of all things of the world of nature (*'ālam-i ṭab'*), the intermediate world, and the world of Resurrection. This is because of their ascension to the disentangled world and domination over lower realms. Of course, these stations belong to those who are resurrected in God, because no trace of selfhood is left in these servants of God and they are fully cleansed and purified. Otherwise, they could not transcend time and space.

The Immaculate Imāms attained such a station that they were able to know the past and the future. They reached the spring of divine Majesty and drank the eternal elixir from it. That is the reason they were free from limitations of time and space and were able to know themselves, which is a prerequisite for and indeed identical with knowing the Lord.[556] They attained the highest station of sincerity and purity and found sanctuary in the safety of the Divine Threshold. It is by virtue of this station that they were able to answer any question about the past and the future, or minor and essential practical commands of religion and divine sciences.

In the sacred soul of the Imām, which is the universal soul, and in his intermediate world, which is the same as the universal imaginal world, or the realm of divine decree and predestination (*qaḍā' wa qadar*), issues are even deeper and more profound than what we have described above; so is the degree of their knowledge of these worlds, and the control over them deeper and more extraordinary. To attain such a station necessitates abandoning dogmatism and setting aside contingent and particular relations that belong to this world: "*For when the Trumpet is blown, that day there shall be no kinship any more between them, neither will they question one another.*"[557]

In the world of Resurrection, associations of people and their relationships with each other are based on the truth, not contingencies such as kinship. Although people may not have any blood relationship with each other, they are connected in a relationship based on the truth. In our world truth and falsehood mingle together, and their relationships are based on personal interest and gain and loss. In the other worlds, however, truth and falsehood are separated from one another. Relationships are based on how people are close to or distanced from the truth. In this world, people respect the celebrated individuals in order to take benefits from them, but there is no such relationship in the next world: "*And when the Blast shall sound, upon the day when*

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[556] Ḥadīth: "*Man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa Rabbahu.*"
[557] Qur'an 23: 101.

a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his consort, his sons, every man that day shall have business to suffice him."[558]

Whoever is closer to God and His Messenger has a more honorable status. There are some narrations that indicate that when the Twelfth Imām, the Mahdi, reappears [from occultation] he shall establish the laws of inheritance among people based on brotherhood in faith and spiritual affiliation, rather than kinship and blood relations, just as it was in early days of Islam when the Prophet built the community in Medina. As we discussed before, hierarchically, the reappearance of the Imām of the Age is a prelude to the Day of Return as the Day of Return is a prelude to Resurrection. Therefore, family relationships will not [necessarily] lead to salvation on the Day of Resurrection: "*Friends on that day shall be foes to one another, but the god-fearing...*"[559] Since all friendships that are not based on the love of God are not truthful, they will turn into hostility and hatred in the Hereafter where the truth is the norm. The people of the world love each other for personal gain and expectations. When those are not met, naturally friendships turn into hostility and hatred. When the time of Resurrection approaches, the foundation of everything in this world will change, because friendships based on greed, anger, selfishness, physical pleasure, love for money, power, status, food, and other illusive and contingent values have no place in the realm of Resurrection, for "*and unto Him you shall be turned.*"[560]

In contrast, the God-fearing servants and brothers in faith love each other unconditionally and without expectations. They try to help each other because of God, not for personal or worldly gains. Since they love each other in God and the truth, nothing can destroy such love. Friendships based on worldly expectations, on the other hand, end with the first step we take towards death. Hence, the angels of death who are appointed to

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[558] Qur'an 80: 33–37.
[559] Qur'an 43: 67.
[560] Qur'an 29: 21.

take the soul of an individual will say to him on his deathbed, *"Indeed, the bond between you is now broken; that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you."*[561]

[561] Qur'an 6: 94.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Seventh Discourse

Every Being Finds Existentiation Because of Its Connection to God

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *And thou shalt see the mountains, that thou supposest fixed, passing by like clouds—God's handiwork, who has created everything very well. He is aware of the things you do."*[562]

This is one of several Qur'anic verses that deal with the destruction of all creations in heaven and earth, including the mountains and the oceans that precedes the Day of Judgment. This verse directly follows another verse related to the blowing of the trumpet and describes the events before Resurrection: the mountains move like the clouds in the sky but people believe that they are stable. *"Surely the Day of Decision is an appointed time, the day the Trumpet is blown, and you shall come in troops, and heaven is opened, and become gates, and the mountains are set in motion, and become as a mirage."*[563]

A mirage is an illusion. It appears to the human eye as a reality, but it is false. If the physical movement and destruction of the mountains is real and takes place, it defies rationality to say that people would think the heavens and earth and the mountains are fixed, because their movement will be visible, whereas their reality is fixed. The explanation is that everything that seemed to possess independent existence and permanence will become like a mirage. All majestic mountains and oceans that seemed to exist independently will be destroyed: "*...And heaven is opened, and become gates, and the mountains are set*

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[562] Qur'an 27: 87.
[563] Qur'an 78: 19–20.

in motion, and become a mirage.[564] Only their reality remains in God, for it is "*God's handiwork, who has created everything very well.*"

It becomes clear the mountains do not break down into small pieces or melt because they are still of the same substance but appear in different form. Then, at the advent of Resurrection, creation will appear like a mirage for humans; the solid entities will be displayed like the movement of running clouds, yet their essential and unchangeable relation to God will remain intact.

One must contemplate and reflect on the Qur'anic verses that describe the signs of such a day: "*And naught of theirs is hidden from God. 'Whose is the Kingdom today?' 'God's, the One, the Omnipotent.'*"[565] "*The day you turn about, retreating, having none to defend you from God.*"[566]

On that Day no soul can help or save another soul. All power, kingdoms, and command shall belong to Him alone as always. No one can escape His command on that day as on all days. God's Names and Attributes are eternal: otherwise He would not be God.

> *Upon that day you shall have no shelter, no denial.*[567]
>
> *The day a master shall avail nothing a client, and they shall not be helped.*[568]
>
> *And beware of a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any counterpoise be taken, neither shall they be helped.*[569]

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564 Qur'an 78: 19–20.
565 Qur'an 46: 10.
566 Qur'an 40: 3.
567 Qur'an 42: 47.
568 Qur'an 44: 41.
569 Qur'an 2: 48.

A day when no soul shall possess aught to succour another soul; that day the Command shall belong unto God.[570]

The day it comes, no soul shall speak save by His leave.[571]

The question is, therefore, what the message is that is hidden in these verses. The message is that on that day these realities will be revealed to human beings. The Day of Resurrection is the day of understanding and discovering the truths. It is the day of removing the veils and manifesting the truth. In this world man's passion, desires, and love for material possessions veil the truth and do not allow him to understand that all existent things are illusive like a mirage. The meaning of *"And faces shall be humbled unto the Living, the Eternal,"*[572] and *"There is no one in the House except the Lord of the house"* will be unveiled on that day. The true meaning of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet about a poem that he called the best poem any Arab poet ever wrote will be understood on that day:

Be aware that all things are null and void except God
All bounties inevitably will be demolished.[573]

How eloquently Fakhr al-Dīn Iraqi[574] alludes to this reality in his poem:

From the purity of wine and elegance of the cup
The color of the wine and the glass became one
as though it is all cup and no wine
Or it is all wine and no cup.

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[570] Qur'an 82: 19.
[571] Qur'an 11: 105.
[572] Qur'an 20: 111.
[573] Labid.
[574] Fakhr al-Dīn Iraqi, *Divān*, #155.

از صفای می و لطافت جام
در هم آمیخت رنگ جام، مدام
همه‌جا مست و نیست گویی می
یا مدام است و نیست گویی جام

On that day, it will be clear that all creation in its entirety is in reality the theophany of God's Beauty and Majesty. People will understand the true meaning of "*the Master of the Day of Doom*"[575] and that kingdom, majesty, knowledge, power, might, and life all belong merely to God alone. Thus we can conclude that God's Attributes do not belong to Him just on the Resurrection Day, but at all times. If the Qur'anic verses discuss them in relation to the Resurrection Day it simply means on the Day of Judgment all contingent relationships will end and those Attributes will be revealed in such a way that all people can fully understand them: "*O if the evildoers might see, when they see the chastisement, that the power altogether belongs to God, and that God is terrible in chastisement, when those that were followed disown their followers, and they see the chastisement, and their cords are cut asunder.*"[576]

No longer will ordinary relationships survive then, and all creatures will live only in relation with God, all absorbed in Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), and nothing will possess an existence independent of God, as Ibn Fariḍ said,

Emphasize beauty in all things and do not say
You like to limit it to worldly adornment
For the beauty of every beautiful thing
is from His beauty lent to it as a trust.[577]

We mentioned before that the inner reality (*bāṭin*) of this world is the Image of God hidden behind the veils of outward forms (*ẓāhir*). This outward form is based on permanent and unchangeable laws of cause and effect as the Qur'an says in the following verses: "*And thou shall find no changing the wont of God.*"[578] "*And thou shalt never find any altering the wont of God.*"[579]

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[575] Qur'an 1: 3.
[576] Qur'an 2: 165–166.
[577] Ibn Fariḍ, *Naẓm al-suluk*, pp. 69–70.
[578] Qur'an 33: 62.
[579] Qur'an 35: 43.

All actions and changes follow this accurate and amazing order without any exception. For instance, a small plant grows following a chain of unchangeable processes. We rightly relate all beings to this chain according to logical and philosophical principles. Now, I ask you to transcend the human domain and look at all beings in their divine aspect. You will realize that all beings are under God's Power and Will; their reality finds meaning only in their relation to God who created them by saying "Be!" and they came into existence. Without such connection to God, these beings are illusive like a mirage. If He emanates, they will be; otherwise they will not exist. This is like a productive factory where each machine performs its function but all are machines directed by one central command, although this metaphor cannot describe the reality of the existence of things and their connection to God.

The created image of this universe is based on precise and orderly chains of cause and effect, each with a special function, and the removal of a single ring in that chain will result in the destruction of the whole. The divine aspect of creation as the Image of God (*wajh-i ilāhi*) manifests the entire chain of creation in relation to God. This is the light of God's Oneness (*tawḥīd*) that emanated from the invisible world (*'ālam-i ghayb*) and set the splendid machine of creation in motion. This system in its entirety is a theophany of His Beauty and Majesty, and is all under God's command. On the Day of Resurrection the created image of all beings will be a mirage and their divine image will be witnessed and experienced by all, as the Qur'an says: "*So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything, and unto whom you shall be returned.*"[580]

In this world people are negligent and preoccupied with nature, and learn through the chain of cause and effect. On the Resurrection Day these criteria will become null and void. It is only then that the people will understand what it meant when it was said, "*God was and there was nothing besides Him.*" God is always One in His Names, Attributes, and actions. This Unity

[580] Qur'an 36: 83.

has always been and will always be. God is One in all worlds, be it this world or the world of Resurrection. Therefore, how is it possible for illusive beings to claim existence before God, Majestic and Glorious is He? The Qur'an states, *"O men, you are the poor in relation to God; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable."*[581]

And a poet wrote,

> All things, whatever they are, are not worthy
> to claim existence before His Existence

On the Day of Resurrection, the blinding luminosity of God's light will burn individual identity and will melt I-ness (*anānīyah*), as the Qur'an describes: *"The bond between you is now broken; that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you."*[582]

Man spends his life loving worldly things and wasting his most precious assets, which are his knowledge, power, and life, in pursuit of illusive and worthless things. Like a cross-eyed person he seeks other than God and forgets Him and His commands. On the Day of Resurrection he will realize how lost he was.

A true lover and traveler on the path to God must ignore anything other than his true Beloved, traverse through the stations of sincerity, and attain the station of those who were purified by God and who were brought nigh to Him. Such lovers will see God everywhere, as the Commander of the Faithful said: "By God I did not see a thing unless I saw God before it, with it, and after it."[583]

> The pure heart which is illuminated by divine knowledge and
> purity
> Whatever it sees, sees God first

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[581] Qur'an 35: 15.
[582] Qur'an 6: 94.
[583] Aqa Mirza Jawad Malekī Tabrīzī, *Asrār al-ṣalāt*, p. 65.

> *"He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything."*[584]

It is in this station that one who frees one's soul from desires of the carnal soul and turns to see God and His friends will become intoxicated with that heavenly wine that the Qur'an has promised: *"And their Lord shall give them to drink a pure draught."*[585]

If God becomes our Friend He will open our eyes to see the truth, our ears to hear the truth, and our tongue to tell the truth. Otherwise, we will spend our life behind the veils and traverse on the path of falsehood, claiming qualities that in fact belong to Him alone.

> *But whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall be a life of narrowness, and on the Resurrection Day We shall raise him blind. He shall say, "O my Lord, why hast thou raised me blind, and I was wont to see?" God shall say, "Even so it is. Our signs came unto thee, and thou didst forget them; and so today thou art forgotten."*[586]

Man must take refuge in God lest he trust other than God and lose God, for if he traverses on the path of love [of God], he will join Imām 'Ali and plead, "O God! Place my tongue in Your remembrance eternally and make my heart mad by Your love."[587] In such a station that Imām 'Ali had attained he became God's friend, God's lion, God's tongue, and His hand.[588] Any traveler who loves 'Ali acknowledges his *wilāyah* and follows his command. Then Imām 'Ali will show him the firmament of divine Knowledge and unlock the gates of [heaven] and remove all veils before his eyes, as it has been said:

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[584] Qur'an 57: 3.
[585] Qur'an 76: 21.
[586] Qur'an 20: 124–126.
[587] From *Du'ā-ye kumail.*
[588] An allusion to *Ḥadīth* Nawāfil.

On the path of love if you traverse with sincerity
the Beloved will come to welcome you at your first step!"[589]

[589] Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-'ibād*, Tehran, 1373/1994, p. 98.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Eighth Discourse

The Disappearance of the Human Aspect and Manifestation of the Divine Aspect on the Day of Resurrection

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book.

> *And call not upon another god with God; there is no god but He. All things perish, except His Face. His is the Judgment, and unto Him you shall be returned.*[590]

This noble verse establishes five premises: (1) Do not call upon another god along with God; (2) There is no god but He; (3) All things perish, except His Face; (4) The judgment and order belongs to Him alone; (5) All people shall be returned unto Him. Indeed, the last four points are the reasons that establish the first point. God is able to command that no other gods be called on along with Him because there is no god but He, because all things perish expect His Face, because judgment belongs to Him alone, and because all entities return to Him.

The third premise is the subject of our discussion. It can be considered as the reason for the second one; since all things perish but His Face, then there is nothing except Him to be worshiped. The Face of God is actually God Himself, and humans have to call upon the Being with a permanent existence, not a perishable one. He is God who has no association with any other being, judgment belongs to him, and all of creation will return to Him.

The question is to whom the word "Face" refers. There are two views on this question. One view is that it refers to God, which means that everything perishes except God. The other reading of the verse is that the "Face/Image" refers to the thing,

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[590] Qur'an 28: 88.

meaning everything perishes except the face of that thing. Both ideas make sense, although rhetorically it is better to say it refers to God because, "He" in the last sentence refers to God as well. This verse denotes that all entities and beings perish and are annihilated right now, not in the future: "*All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.*"[591]

The word *fān*, which means *perishing*, informs us that things perish at this and every moment, not that they will perish at some time in the future. This explains the meaning of the verse, "*whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God.*"[592] The Face of God is everywhere, encompassing everything. If God's Face is permanent and always present and all other things perish, then we have to understand that every created thing has two modes of existence. Its created mode, which is relative and seems independent, is perishing, whereas its archetypal existence (Face) is permanent and indeed eternal. This is the same principle proved and accepted in theology and philosophy that *existence* contrasts with non-existence. So whatever exists, in any form, as long as it exists, will not be non-existent. Thus, if the Qur'an declares that on the Day of Resurrection, the sun will collapse, the stars will darken, and other similar events will take place, it is referring to their annihilation in their created mode of existence that man knows. In their archetypal existence before God, all things, even the sky, earth, mountains, and seas, have permanent existence. Unless the divine image of existence covers a thing, that thing will not find existence, as the verse says: "*So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything, and unto whom you shall be returned.*"[593]

There are some narrations that denote everything will perish, while at the same time discuss the permanence of the sky, the earth, and time. One must reflect on such narrations. Imām 'Ali wrote:

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591 Qur'an 55: 26–27.
592 Qur'an 2: 115.
593 Qur'an 36: 83.

> When this world perishes, only the glory of God remains, nothing accompanies Him, just as it was before creation. No occasion, space, moment, and time are there. The deadlines and the periods of times will perish, and years and hours will be demolished. There is but the Almighty One who is the return of all things.[594]

When the Imām says all things return to Him, this means that there are some things that exist and return to God.

In his commentary on verses 87–88 of chapter 27, Ali Ibn Ibrāhīm Qumī recorded a narration from Imām Sajjād that describes the moment that the trumpet is blown: "In that moment, the Almighty will say in a very loud voice, which can be heard by heaven and earth: 'To whom belongs the dominion today?' There is nobody to answer. Then God will answer Himself, saying: 'To the One Almighty God.'"[595]

According to this narration heaven and earth are then in existence and hear the voice of God. Also, in his book *Amālī*, Sheikh Ṣadūq quotes Imām Ṣādiq as follows: "When God wills to resurrect the people, the sky will rain for forty days. The different parts of bodies will gather and flesh will grow."[596]

The fact that time (40 days) and an event (rain) are mentioned in the above narration indicates that they (time, rain, and other things) will be in existence on such a day.

In his *Kitāb al-iḥtijāj* Shaykh Ṭabarsī reported that an atheist asked Imām Ṣādiq whether the soul will perish after leaving the body or stay alive, and the Imām replied,

> It remains until the trumpet is blown. At that moment, all things are demolished and perish; there is no sense and no substance to be sensed or touched. Then, the things come back to God as He created them in the beginning. This period takes 400 years, during which creation goes to sleep. This is

[594] *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon 184, edited by Abduh, Vol. 1, p. 359.
[595] *Tafsir-e Qumī*, Lithograph edition, p. 581.
[596] Ṣadūq, *Amālī*, discussion 33, Lithograph edition, p. 107.

> between the two blowings of the trumpet [one that prompts death and the other for Resurrection].[597]

Although this narration clarifies that all things will perish, it suggests the continued existence of time. In addition, as the Imām states, creation will fall sleep, and will not become totally non-existent. After a series of other questions and answers, the Imām continues:

> At the moment of Resurrection, life-giving rain will descend on the earth so that the earth grows. Then people will hit each other like the hitting of water-skins together. Then, the dust of each person will be separated from that of others like the separation of gold from dirt by washing or of butter from milk by churning. Then the soil of each body will rejoin and by the permission of the All-Powerful God, go towards its soul. Thus, the physical form by God's permission returns to its original shape and the soul enters into it. At that moment a person becomes complete and aware of himself and recognizes himself.

The narration presumes the existence of time and space and the earth, its movement, and its transformation. If there is a Return, there must be time, and then Resurrection. Otherwise, there will not be Resurrection and Return. Majlisī interpreted the last narration in the following terms:

> This narration indicates the perishing of all things after the trumpet is blown and that time is an imaginary concept. It does not make sense to say that annihilation takes 400 years. Perhaps the Imām meant the perishing of all things except the celestial spheres, or only the sphere that is related to the determination of time.[598]

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī rejected Majlisī's argument and stated that the above narration of Imām Ṣādiq addresses the substance of things. If when all things perish time does not exist, then what is the Imām's intention when he speaks of 400 years? The other

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[597] *Kitāb al-iḥtijāj*, published in Najaf, Vol. 2, p. 97.
[598] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār,* 6: 330.

problem is that if the perishing of things takes place outside of time, then speaking of the Return becomes meaningless.

Majlisī's conclusion that time is an imaginary concept is not acceptable either, because such an assumption denies the existence of hierarchical time. What he said about the perishing of all things except the universe cannot be deduced from the narration. In addition, if we assume that between the two blowings of the trumpet the universe will continue to exist, this necessitates the survival of the elements within the universe as well. We know that this is not the case.[599]

It seems that the criticism that 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī presented, in a sense, is what we discussed before as the two images of the existence of things, that is, their created image that will perish and their divine image that is permanent. Ṭabāṭabā'ī has discussed this issue in a similar manner in his treatise on the Return (*Ma'ād*). In short, the created image of every existent thing that is likened to the "House of Spider" will perish, but its divine image is eternal. All these find existentiation in God's existence; therefore they will not perish, whereas all things in the universe obtain their reality and nobility from God. The question is how it is possible that a single existing thing could possess two images at the same time. What is the origin of these two images? Are these two images of existence extraneous to a single being? Are they only two rational aspects of a single being such as speech and the animal aspects of a human, which originate from two realities but find existentiation in a single being? Or is one aspect real and independent and the other contingent? If so, the difference between the two is like that between the real and a metaphor, truth and falsehood, phenomenon and noumenon, and the primary idea and final one—in short, between the ocean and a mirage.

Those who view the world as a chain of cause and effect that independently affects all things limit their understanding to the created image of things. But those who possess the vision and

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[599] *Risalah fi al-ma'ād* (al-Insan Bad al-Dunya), chapter on "*Sifat yawm al-Qiyāmah*," Lithograph edition, pp. 22–28.

insight to see the divine Image find all things to be merely the manifestations of God, and the chain of cause and effect dominated by and annihilated in God's Knowledge, Power, and Will. For this reason, the diversity and multiplicity of phenomena do not mislead them to believe in the multiplicity of existence. From their perspective, nothing is outside the circle of God's Knowledge, Power, and Will. They truly experience what the Qur'an repeats time and again:

So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything. [600]

He is God, One.[601]

He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward: He has knowledge of everything.[602]

To Him belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and unto Him all matters are returned. [603]

He is with you wherever you are.[604]

God there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting.[605]

He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.[606]

He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing.[607]

In short, all these vast and long chains of cause and effect, contingencies, multiplicities, and possibilities are nothing but a mere mirage in relation to the Hereafter and before the Image of God. Therefore, in relation to this world, all things are real and permanent. Not even the smallest degree of change or alteration

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[600] Qur'an 36: 83.
[601] Qur'an 112: 1.
[602] Qur'an 57: 3.
[603] Qur'an 57: 5.
[604] Qur'an 57: 4.
[605] Qur'an 2: 255.
[606] Qur'an 8: 61.
[607] Qur'an 17: 1.

can be introduced into that realm. This is truly fascinating, and intellects become perplexed before it. The chain of cause and effect or contingencies, the engendering or prescriptive commands, and all things that are present in our world constitute the totality of this system. When this order is destroyed as a result of the coming of the divine order, it becomes clear that the difference between the two orders is like the difference between the real and a metaphor.

Every world is subject to its own particular order. People who live in the sensible world where every substance changes continuously seek for cause and effect in that order and assume that each thing has an independent existence of its own; the sun, the moon, and the rain are all independent in their existence. Conversely, people who see God's Image in everything always say, "*There is nothing but God,*" there is no independent thing in the universe but God, as the Qur'an says: "*Know thou therefore that there is no god but God.*"[608]

Therefore, [as it is obvious] the difference between the two perspectives is in man's perception and the way he sees creation. The world of multiplicity is made up on the basis of rational argumentation, and belief in the independent view of the mind. If the mind becomes purified, it will no longer see two worlds. Then the inward aspect of existence will appear, and the world with all its order, marvels of creation, and wonders of existence will be like a mirror and the theophany of God. This is the World of Command (*'Ālam-i Amr*).

When our soul came to this world it looked at the existent from such a perspective and perceived things to possess independent existence. This was due to the intensity of the light of *tawḥīd* and the multiplicity of manifestations. If the soul were able to reach the light of Oneness and see God as the only Independent Being, it would have not seen the world of creation, but only the world of Command. There, all things are at their designated place and God is their Existentiator:

[608] Qur'an 57: 19.

God there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting.[609]

And faces shall be humbled unto the Living, the Eternal.[610]

When we say all things perish and only God is eternal, it does not mean that all existent things will lose their created existence out there as well as their existence in God, and God will remain alone. God's Oneness does not depend on the existence of any other thing. Otherwise, He would not be God. Indeed, the created world and all existence is a further proof of God's unity, rather than altering or weakening it. Thus, the existence of the worlds of Dominion, of angels, and of intellect does not contradict the Unity of God. On the contrary, all of them with the same tongue constantly give testimony and prove God's Unity.

In the midst of all multiplicity God is always One, as it is said, "God was and there was nothing besides Him. And now it is as always was." All these existent things that are seen are separate from God; rather, they are annihilated in God. Since man is cross-eyed, he sees them as separate from God. The eye must be treated and its disease cured.

Our soul must be cured to experience God's Unity. If it is cured, it will experience the world of Command in *this* world, that is to say, it will be able to see Divine Unity in this world. Otherwise, it will realize it after death and will understand the divine Image of the existent things. It is there that man, will understand that there is truly no power in the world except God. He is the cause of all causes. "*And the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand.*"[611]

People waste their lives preoccupied with falsehood and along with God worship different idols. As Prophet Joseph said to his two companions in prison, "*Say, which is better, my fellow-prisoners—many gods at variance, or God the One, the Omnipotent?*"[612] When a human being claims independent

[609] Qur'an 2: 255.
[610] Qur'an 20: 111.
[611] Qur'an 39: 67.
[612] Qur'an 12: 39.

existence, even if he sees God in the food he consumes, in his transactions with others, when he is awake or sleep and when he prays, [unknowingly] he commits polytheism. Indeed seeing anything to possess existence independent from God is a form of polytheism, for he is still traversing in the perishing created world. The only thing that is eternal is God's Image: "*What is with you comes to an end, but what is with God abides.*"[613] If man can set aside the belief in the independent existence of things, be pious and steadfast, and trust in God, he shall face his Resurrection in this world. Otherwise, the divine command will appear and demolish this world. On such a day man will see all existence in God. The atheists or polytheists cannot see the existence of the world; they merely see the illusion of existence as the reality, whereas the believers and monotheists see all existence in God. In their view, the true existence of the world is in its annihilation in God. In such a situation conventional wisdom and contingent powers cannot help people. This is the reason the sinners will say, "*My wealth has not availed me, my authority is gone from me.*"[614]

God and the angels will tell to him:

> *Take him, and fetter him, and then roast him in Hell, then in a chain of seventy cubits' length insert him! Behold, he never believed in God the All-mighty, and he never urged the feeding of the needy; therefore he today has not here one loyal friend, neither any food saving foul pus, that none excepting the sinners eat.*[615]

The daily prayer (*ṣalāt, namāz*) and almsgiving are two crucial means of flying in the firmament of divine Knowledge. Prayer connects man to God and enhances the light of Oneness in the heart. Almsgiving increases the love of God in man's heart and decreases love of the world. They are the two wings to fly to the world of detachment and God's Kingdom. The

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[613] Qur'an 16: 96.
[614] Qur'an 69: 28–29.
[615] Qur'an 69: 30–37.

Prophet said, "The love of the world is the source of all wrongs."[616] Prayer and almsgiving decrease this love, as the Qur'an states: *"Say to My servants who believe, that they perform the prayer, and expend of that We have provided them, secretly and in public, before a day comes wherein shall be neither bargaining nor befriending."*[617]

As a conclusion, all *ḥadīths*, narrations, and verses of the Qur'an that describe the destruction of the earth and time, changes in the oceans, moon, and sun and the like, are valid and hold true in relation to the created aspect of the universe. But the divine and lordly aspect of their existence is eternal in God. God does not need to demolish them to declare His Unity because He is One and His Oneness is eternal. To see otherwise is to separate people from God and veil the eyes from seeing the light of God everywhere and at all times.

What prevents this potentiality from actualizing in every man is his preoccupation with desires, appetite, and sins that separate him from God and prevent him from seeing God's light, which shines in every being in the universe. If the soul is cured, all these problems will disappear. Man can see the connection between all existent things in the universe and God, and God's light will illuminate his universe, and a believer can see all this. This is the world of Resurrection, which is a part of the realm of Return (*Ma'ād*) that is Return to God.

> *As He originated you so you will return.*[618]
>
> *As We originated the first creation, so We shall bring it back again.*[619]

The term "Return" (*Ma'ād*) means Return to God, and it entails the unveiling of all realities of what man has done in this world, including his religious duties. God shall give man his rewards or punishments. But this is not the entire meaning of

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616 Suyuti, *Jami' al-ṣaghīr* as quoted in Bihiqi, *Shouob al-iman*, p. 146.
617 Qur'an 14: 31.
618 Qur'an 7: 29.
619 Qur'an 21: 104.

the Return. For the ordinary believers, understanding the meaning of God's Oneness, His Power, Majesty, and Glory becomes possible on the Day of Resurrection; for Friends of God (*awliyā'*) this becomes possible in this world.

Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs[620] reported the following passages from Imām Ḥusayn's famous *'Arafah* prayer:

> My God, I learned from the different signs and changing situations [in the world] that You want to manifest Yourself to me in every single thing so that I cannot ignore you in anything.
>
> My God, you commanded me to refer to the signs. Now [that I followed your command] take me back to Yourself while I am dressed with lights and guiding sights; so that I can return to You with the same purity of heart and protection of mysteries, to consider them and my heart's lack of trust in them.
>
> You are He who illuminates the hearts of His friends so that they know You and believe in Your Unity. You are who cleans the hearts of His friends from all strangers so that they do not love except You and do not take refuge except in You. You are their intimate Friend when they become afraid in worlds, and You guide them when the signs become apparent. What does he who loses You possess? And what does he who finds You lose?

We can behold both the outward meanings of the Qur'an as well as its inward meaning, which calls all creatures as the sign pointing to the subject of the sign. Indeed, all parts of creation and the whole of creation are the divine aspects and His sign.

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[620] Sayyid Raḍi al-Dīn, known as ibn Ṭāwūs, was a grandson of Imām Ḥasan who was born in the city of Hilla in 589 and died in Baghdad in 664. More than 50 books and treatises are attributed to him. See *Danesh nameh-ye bozorg Islami*, Tehran.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Twenty-Ninth Discourse

Ma'ād is Returning to God and Witnessing His Countenance

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *Yet give thou good tidings unto the patient who, when they are visited by an affliction, say, "Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return."*[621]

The term *Ma'ād* means Return, and in the context of Islamic eschatology denotes the time or place wherein all things return to God. The Qur'an states: *"As He originated you so you will return."*[622]

The Return to God, however, does not mean the day of punishment or reward. Obviously, in addition to witnessing God's Majesty, Power, and Unity, the *Return* implies paradise and hell as well.

Thus, *Ma'ād* is returning to God. All humanity has to return to God. On the path of returning, man will discover several truths that were hidden from him because of limitations of his knowledge of cause and effect. In this world man's illusions and his desires keep him from understanding the ultimate reality. When he is departing this world, the unveiling of the truth will remove these illusions, and the principiality of the truth will be revealed to him. In other words, the created image [of the world] will disappear, and its celestial and divine Image will be revealed.

The reality of creation is one because individuation of creation implies oneness. Each man or thing is one and unique because individuation denotes singularity. The created and divine aspects are merely two contingencies. This is not in

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[621] Qur'an 2: 155–156.
[622] Qur'an 7: 29.

contradiction with individuation. If one of those two images appears then the other one disappears, except in the case of those who reach the station of the "comprehension of all comprehensiveness" (*jam' al-jam'*).[623] those who comprehend both levels of creation in this world. As long as a man is afflicted with the desires of the carnal soul, vain thoughts, and a satanic outlook, the divine aspect and the ultimate truth will not be unveiled for him. Imām Sajjād, in Abū Ḥamzah Thumali's prayer, says: "[O My God,] he who departs towards you has a short distance from you. Indeed, You do not veil Yourself to Your creatures; what veils them is that they desire other than You."[624]

For those who walk on the straight path (*sirāt-al-mustaqim*) and are steadfast in attaining knowledge of God, the truth will be unveiled in this world. They will die [to the world] and will experience their Resurrection in this world, as the Prophet said: "Die before you die."[625] All other realms of existence will be unveiled to them while they are alive and living while other people will witness them after death. These men live under God's protection and the Prophet's patronage, as he said: "My friends are under my domes; nobody knows them other than myself."[626]

The Prophet also said: "I saw the glory of my Lord—Majestic and Glorious is He—while there was no veil between me and Him except one white ruby (*yāqūt bayda*) in a green

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[623] I am indebted to Sachiko Murata for defining this term. Quoting Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Jandi's commentary on ibn 'Arabi's *Fusus al-hikam*, she wrote, "Since God brought two forms together in Adam—the form of the Real and the form of creation—he possessed the level of the 'comprehension of all comprehensiveness' [*jam' al-jam'*]. This level corresponds to the form of God since the Divine Reality must be the unity comprehending all necessary realities." See Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 96.
[624] *Mafatih al-jinan*, narrated from *Misbah al-mutahajjid*, p.402.
[625] *Mirsad al-ibad*, lithograph edition, pp. 179, 182, and 193.
[626] Ibid., p. 90.

garden."[627] Imām 'Ali said: "By God! If all veils are removed my certainty will not increase."[628] The Prophet appealed to God, saying, "O my God, show me all things as they are."[629] And 'Isa ibn Maryam said: "Whoever does not experience rebirth does not enter into the dominion of heaven."[630] It is clear that the rebirth he is referring to is the death to this world and Resurrection in God.

In a famous *ḥadīth qudsi* God addressed Prophet David, commanding him:

> Inform all people on My earth that I am the Friend of those who love Me, Companion of those who become My companion, intimate Friend to those who remember Me, protecting Friend of those who become My friend. I choose him who chooses Me, and obey who is obedient to Me.
>
> Whoever loves Me and I know his love is sincere, then I shall choose him for Me and shall grant him such a life that nobody can precede him. He who seeks Me truly will find Me, and he who seeks other than Me will not find Me. O people of the world, avoid pride of the world, which is not for you. Seek My generosity, My companionship and friendship. Be sincere with Me so that I be sincere with you and I hasten towards your love.[631]

Hajj Mullā Mahdi Narrāqi reported the following narration from Imām 'Ali in *Jāmi' al-sa'ādah*:

> God has a special wine for His friends that when they drink, they become intoxicated. When they become intoxicated, they will be joyful, and when they become joyful they will

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[627] *Risalah sir wa suluk*, attributed to Allameh Bah al-Ulum, p.48.

[628] *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 40, p. 153.

[629] This is a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. A similar statement has been attributed to Imām 'Ali. See *Dua-e mir al-Mumenin Associated with Commentaries of Haj Mullā Muhammad Jafar Kabutar Ahangi.*

[630] *Bahr al-maaref*, Mullā Abd al-Samad Ḥamadānī, lithograph edition, p. 103.

[631] *Musakken al-fowad*, Shahid-e Thani, lithograph edition, p. 17.

become purified, when they are purified they shall melt, when they melt, they shall become pure. When they become pure, they shall seek Me. When they seek Me they shall find Me. When they find Me, they shall be connected to Me. When they are connected to Me, I shall be connected to them. And when I become connected to them, there is no separation between them and their Beloved.[632]

Also Imām 'Ali ibn Mūsā al-Riḍa narrated in what is known as the "Golden Chain Hadith" from the Prophet, who said, "I heard from God that 'there is no God but Allah, who is my fortress, whoever enters into My fortress is immune from My punishment.'" Then Imām Riḍā added, "This immunity is contingent upon conditions, and I am one of those conditions."

There are many aspects in this *ḥadīth* that must be elaborated here. I shall explain one aspect of it. The statement *"there is no God but Allah"* that is God's fortress refers to the meaning of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*). He who enters the abode of God's Unity shall be saved. The reality of God's Unity is the same as God's Face, that when it is revealed to a person, he shall see the world through the eyes of *tawḥīd.* Attaining this station and experiencing *tawḥīd* is not possible without connecting to and loving *wilāyah* because *wilāyah* is the path to the reality of Divine Names and Attributes, Thus, Imām Riḍā makes attaining this station contingent upon acknowledging and accepting *wilāyah.* [633]

Other than this group, the rest of the people are preoccupied with their own desires, and their inner eyes and hearts are veiled by illusions and imaginings. They become blind, and the truth appears to them as false, and what is untrue seems true to them. When they depart this world and experience God's Unity, only then will they realize that there was nothing but manifestation of the signs of God's power and the contingent world was given

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[632] *Jāmi' al-sa'ādah*, Vol. 3, p. 152.

ان لله تعالى شرابا لاوليائه اذا شربوا سكروا و اذا سكروا طربوا ، و اذا طربوا طابوا ، و اذا طابوا ذابوا ، و اذا ذابوا خلصوا ، و اذا خلصوا طلبوا ، و اذا طلبوا وجدوا ، و اذا وجدوا وصلوا ، و اذا وصلوا اتصلوا ، و اذا اتصلوا لا فرق بينهم و بين حبيبهم.

[633] *Ma'ānī al-Akhbar*, pp. 370–371; Ṣāduq, *Tawḥīd*, pp. 24–25.

existence by God. They will understand that no other being possessed independent existence other than God. Only then shall they understand the meaning of the verse of the Qur'an: *"Then it is said to them, 'Where are those you associated, apart from God?' They shall say, 'They have gone astray from us; nay, but it was nothing at all that we called upon aforetime.' Even so God leads astray the unbelievers."*[634]

They shall realize that such forms of worship in reality belonged to God alone although He was veiled from their eyes. This fact is not made evident to man in this world, because humans are preoccupied with their imaginations and worship other than God; indeed, *"That is how God leads astray the unbelievers."*[635] In other words, those who tried to hide the face of the truth in this world in turn become lost, for the untruth appears to them as the truth and the truth seems to the sinful as false. Their sin is that they did not distinguish between the truth and the false. Otherwise, they could have realized that there is no being but God and all worship indeed belonged to Him alone:

> *And the day We shall muster them all, then We shall say to those who associate other gods with God: "Get you to your place, you and your associates!" Then We shall set a space between them, and their associates will say, "Not us you were serving. God is a sufficient witness between us and you; assuredly we were heedless of your service." There every soul shall prove its past deeds; and they shall be restored to God, their Protector, the True, and there shall go astray from them that they were forging.*[636]

Considering other beings as independent and appealing to them for help in times of need is polytheism—manifest or non-manifest, because there is no being that is independent and sufficient unto itself except God. God says that on the Day of Resurrection polytheists cannot appeal to their "gods" because that day is the abode of the Truth and there is no being

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634 Qur'an 40: 73–74.
635 Qur'an 40: 74.
636 Qur'an 10: 28–30.

independent of God there. At that time, everybody understands the true nature of their deeds and realizes that they worshipped other than God and that "*they shall be restored to God, their Protector, the True.*"[637] They shall bring back all deeds to God who is the True Protector. As a Persian poem describes,

> Tomorrow when the ultimate truth appears,
> whoever worshiped falsehood will be ashamed.
> Of his deed.[638]

In summary, when the divine light manifests itself in that abode, and the Truth appears, "*And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord*";[639] in reality if the earth becomes illuminated by the light of God and the truth, it will be clear to all that no matter what path human beings walked on in the world, all led to the path of God. Even polytheists [unknowingly] worshiped God.

The question is if that is the case, then what is their sin? Their sin is not in their worship but in the delimitation and relativization of their worship. Instead of seeing God's Beauty in all beings, they imprisoned God and His Infinitude in finite and limited boundaries: "*They are naught but names yourselves have named, and your fathers; God has sent down no authority touching them. They follow only surmise, and what the souls desire; and yet guidance has come to them from their Lord.*"[640]

The sin of polytheists is that they worshiped created beings, forgetting their divine Image; even though God sent them guidance, [they did not realize] that the divine Image is the truth and the created image is a mirage and illusive. They will then regret that they saw God so little and His presence so fragmented just like a person who sees the broken light of the sun and the moon in the water and considers that the real moon and sun. These wrong imaginings and assumptions, multiplicity

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637 Qur'an 10: 30.
638 Ḥāfiẓ, *Divān*, #133.
639 Qur'an 39: 69.
640 Qur'an 53: 23.

of statements, and temptation and anxiety in their hearts prevented them from waiting for the water to settle and reflect the full moon and the sun, for it is only in such a state [of peace] that man's heart can properly reflect and witness the true beauty of God.

Ma'ād means knowing God's infinite Majesty, Power, and Knowledge, and His eternity as it was revealed to man in the world before the world of nature (*'ālam-i ṭab'*). That abode was man's origin and he shall return to the same world he came from. We must struggle to transcend the world of nature and attain the station of witnessing the Lord, Majestic and Glorious is He. The difference is only in the delimited and non-delimited realization of God and His Unity (*tawḥīd*). This is the reality of Return where the manifest and non-manifest (*ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*) become one and the same. The outward becomes a gate to the inward and the inward becomes nothing but a mirror of the outward and a sign of God's Power. This is where the created and divine Images become one and the same and all other means or cause and effect are annihilated in God.

Everything in its existentiation has an outward form. The inward form denotes the absence of something in the outward existence of a thing, while the outward form suggests the relationship of one thing to another. In such a case the outward form and the inner reality of a thing are very different from one another. However, when one thing is not hidden from another, it finds manifestation and that is absolute presence. In this world man is preoccupied with illusions and therefore thinks that this world rests on a series of laws of cause and effect independent of God. This illusion makes the outward appear different from the inward. In other words, the created image and divine Image stand in contradiction to one another. However, if cause and effect are set aside, their illusive nature will become apparent and the divine Image will manifest itself in all things; like the sun's light on different mirrors, the appearance and the inner reality of things will become apparent. In that abode the outward is the same as the inward and the inward is identified with the

outward. In that abode, presence and absence are one and the same and nothing is hidden any longer.

On the Day of Resurrection when all beings congregate, they shall witness God's presence in all things. He is aware of the state of all things. It is the same in this world, but people cannot perceive this:

> *They sally forth unto God, all together.*[641]

> *The day they sally forth, and naught of theirs is hidden from God.*[642]

On that day, everybody is present because there is no veil. The veil belongs to the created world filled with illusions. On the Day of Resurrection they will disappear and all realities will be manifested without any veil: "*Therefore We have now removed from thee thy covering, and so thy sight today is piercing.*[643]

The insightful eye can see the inner reality of things. It is the knowledge of the realm of Dominion (*malakūt*), and this knowledge is connected to divine Knowledge. It is "*The day when the secrets are tried.*"[644] On that day, all hidden intentions and thoughts will come into the open because it is the day that the outward existence of things will disappear and their inward realities will become apparent:

> *Knows he not that when that which is in the tombs is overthrown, and that which is in the breasts is brought out – surely on that day their Lord shall be aware of them!*[645]

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[641] Qur'an 14: 21.
[642] Qur'an 40: 16.
[643] Qur'an 50: 22.
[644] Qur'an 86: 9.
[645] Qur'an 100: 9–11.

The day when neither wealth nor sons shall profit except for him who comes to God with a pure[646] *heart.*[647]

A healthy heart is the one in which there is nothing else but God. Any degree of God's absence from the heart denotes the degree of the sickness of the heart. Sulayman Ibn 'Uyaynah narrated that he asked Imām Ṣādiq about the following verse of the Qur'an, and Imām Ṣādiq replied: "The faithful heart is pure. It is a heart that sees its lord and there is nothing else in it."[648] Then he added, "The heart that is filled with infidelity or doubt is dark. People are invited to purify their hearts so that they will be prepared for the Hereafter."[649]

The peaceful and free heart is ready to see the light of God's Unity and become the locus of manifestation of divine light and divine Qualities.

Shahīd Thānī narrated in *The Secrets of Prayer* (*Asrār al-ṣalāt*) on the authority of the Prophet: "The heart of the believer is pure. In it there is a shining light and the heart of the unbeliever is dark and fallen."[650] He also said, "If there were not Satans around the faithful heart, the children of Adam could see the world of Dominion (*malakūt*)."[651]

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[646] The Quranic term is *qalb al-salim*, meaning a healthy heart filled with peace.

[647] Qur'an 26: 88–89.

[648] Qur'an 83: 15.

[649] *Uṣu'l al-kafi*, vol. II, p. 16.

[650] Ibid.

[651] as quoted in Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XV, p. 29. Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn, known as Shahīd Thānī (911–966/1506–1559), the well-known jurist of the tenth/sixteenth century, was born in Jabal 'Āmil. His expertise of the five schools of Islamic law earned him widespread recognition among Shī'a and Sunni scholars alike. He fell the victim of Ottoman political machinations and was killed by Rustam Pasha, the Grand Vizier of Sultan Sulayman. His book on jurisprudence, *al-Rawḍah al-bahīyah fī sharh- al-lum'ah al-Dimashqīyah*, is still taught in seminaries in Qom and Najaf. See Āqā Bozorg Tehrani, *al-Dharī'ah fī taṣanīf a'yān al-Shī'a*, Beirut, 1403/1983, vii, p. 15. See also, Mohsin Amin 'Āmili, *A'yān al-Shī 'ah*, Beirut, 1406/1986.

Those people spend a lifetime preoccupied with illusions and are far from the realm of detachment. They open their hearts to animal instincts and desires and cannot easily free themselves from those habits. When a person spends his life committing sins like usury and oppression, usurping the properties of the orphans and the needy, then these Satanic and lowly traits become like a second nature to him engraved in his hearts and soul that cannot be easily removed. He has to try hard to change his heart completely. He has to cure the spiritual diseases of the heart gradually and with great effort.

There is a point here that must be addressed and elaborated on. If divine Light and His Attributes and Names will be revealed to every being after death, why do some verses in the Qur'an say that sinners will be veiled and will not see the truth? *"No indeed; but upon that day they shall be veiled from their Lord."*[652] If the Resurrection requires giving testimony to Divine Unity and His Power and other Names and Attributes, what does it mean that the infidels will be "veiled"? To clarify this issue let us give a simple example. A king rules over two categories of subjects. Some of them are good and obedient while some others are rebellious and oppressive. The king opens his court to the first group, hosts them, and rewards them for being good and obedient. This group regards the king as the embodiment of power, justice, and majesty. Then the king suppresses the second group and forces them to obey him. They also acknowledge the king's power and realize that they cannot free themselves from his power. The situation is similar to this on the Day of Resurrection. The faithful face God's Beauty and Mercy, while the sinful experience His Majesty and Power. By virtue of His Beauty and Mercy, God will reward them generously with His infinite bounties, whereas by virtue of His Majesty, Power, and Wrath, He will punish the rebellious subjects. Thus, these two types of manifestations of God's Attributes will lead to His Mercy being extended to the first

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652 Qur'an 83: 15.

group while His Power and Wrath will inflict the second group with torment and fear. When God reminds them of their polytheism when they had said, *"Not us you were serving,"*[653] they will deny that they had worshiped other than God and say, *"By God our Lord, we never associated other gods with Thee."*[654]

Thus God's Unity (*tawhīd*) will be unveiled to all, but His Power will cause the infidels and polytheists to remain veiled to His Beauty, Mercy, and Splendor: *"Upon the day when the leg shall be bared, and they shall be summoned to bow themselves, but they cannot; humbled shall be their eyes, and abasement shall overspread them, for they had been summoned to bow themselves while they were whole."*[655]

On the Day of Resurrection the polytheists also will be called to prostrate themselves before God, but they will not be able to do so, because they will carry their worldly deeds with them into the Hereafter. Although God's Majesty will be manifested to all, the polytheists will not be able to act differently from the way they did in the world. Being proud and rebellious, they shall consider themselves superior to other beings and shall not prostrate themselves to God in the Hereafter, as they did not do in the world. They will not be able to acknowledge God's Majesty and their own helplessness. In the other words, since they did not acknowledge God's Unity in this world, they will not be able to do so in the Hereafter. The story of Abraham alludes to this situation in the Hereafter: *"Deem not that God is heedless of what the evildoers work; He is only deferring them to a day when eyes shall stare, when they shall run with necks outstretched and heads erect, their glances never returned on themselves, their hearts void."*[656]

On that day, their hearts will be poor and void of trust in God because they did not know and love God in this world and were preoccupied with vain thoughts.

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[653] Qur'an 10: 28.
[654] Qur'an 6: 23.
[655] Qur'an 68: 42–43.
[656] Qur'an 14: 42–43.

Those who struggled against their carnal souls, were pious and God-fearing, those who believed in God and devoted themselves to Him—their deeds will be remembered and will be rewarded. In contrast, those who did not take God and His creation seriously and defied His prophets and His scriptures—their deeds will also be remembered, and they will have to face God's Justice.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirtieth Discourse

The World of Resurrection Encompasses the Universe

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book,

> *To God belongs the Unseen in the heavens and in the earth. And the matter of the Hour is as a twinkling of the eye, or nearer. Surely God is powerful over everything."*[657]

Ma'ād means the Return of man to his origin. So it implies the rising of the sun of Divine Unity in the realm of Resurrection and the destruction of the chains of cause and effect that exist in the world of creation. It will be the time for man's returning to God and the moment of witnessing God's Unity and Power, and acknowledging His Splendor, Majesty, and Beauty. Therefore, the world of *Ma'ād* and Resurrection is not parallel to this world; rather it encompasses this world, because the power of God's Unity, Names, and Attributes encompasses all worlds. Thus, perception of the Resurrection and disclosure of the soul and its effects dominates over this world.

Ordinary people are constantly preoccupied with questions that pertain to the time and place of Resurrection as well as heaven and hell. To address these questions we have to start with a short introduction.

The world we live in is the world of matter and nature. The material world is essentially subject to time and space, as these are the indispensable components of its existence. Conversely, the intermediate world is free of matter. The reality of existence is on a higher plane there than in the material world. It is not a world that will come after the material world ends, but that encompasses the material world.

Then, there is the realm of the soul (*'alām-i nafs*), which is higher than the intermediate world with more powerful and mysterious entities. Similarly, the world of the soul does not

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[657] Qur'an 16: 77.

come after the end of the intermediate world to prepare for the Resurrection, which is essentially beyond the limitation of time. In short, the Resurrection world, which is the abode of disclosure of the soul, encompasses the intermediate world, and that world in turn encompasses the material world. These worlds are intertwined in the sense that one dominates the other. The Resurrection world encompasses both the intermediate and the material worlds. Similarly, all beings of the world of Resurrection encompass beings of the world of the soul, which in turn dominate over the world of nature.

Those who purify their souls by obeying God's commands attain the station of purity, and their innermost secrets are removed. With every good deed a veil is removed from their eyes. They attain harmony with the world of Resurrection. Therefore, they enter the intermediate world and the realm of Resurrection while living in this world. In contrast, others who fail to attain this station fail to enter into those worlds and have to go through time to reach there. Had they been able to remove the veils, they too could have experienced the intermediate and Resurrection worlds in this world. Therefore, those who travel on the path of God by His commands will remove the veils that prevent them from witnessing the intermediate and the Resurrection worlds. Thus they free themselves from the world of form and do not see anything other than God in the realm of existence. All their words and deeds are by God's command. They witness divine Beauty and reach salvation while they live on this earth and experience promised paradise here and now, as the Qur'an says: "*Prosperous is he who purifies it.*"[658]

In contrast, those who do not purify their souls have to go through the intermediate world until the train of time takes them to the Resurrection where the trumpet is blown.

Now that we have addressed this question, the answer to the next question about the timing of the Day of Resurrection becomes clear. The Resurrection is present, closer to us than the blink of an eye. Similarly God's paradise is closer to us than the

[658] Qur'an 91: 9.

blink of an eye, because the intermediate and Resurrection are within us. In other words, the human soul contains within itself the intermediate world as well as the world of Resurrection. Ultimately, in order to witness them man only has to remove the veils through self-purification and go through the material and the intermediate world. The Qur'an clearly describes the process in the following verse: "*To God belongs the Unseen in the heavens and in the earth. And the matter of the Hour is as a twinkling of the eye, or nearer. Surely God is powerful over everything.*"[659]

God is everywhere as are His Dominion and visible or invisible realms of His heavens and earth, and all of them are in His hand. Since the true essence of man is closer to him than the blink of an eye, it takes no time for man to get there if God wills, as "*God is powerful over everything.*"[660] Therefore, the answer to such questions as, "When will the intermediate and Resurrection worlds be established?" is simply, "Here and now." They both exist even as we speak. When man leaves the world of nature, he can witness the intermediate world, and once he transcends the realm of form and realizes that all things are in God's hands, he can experience and witness the world of Resurrection.

Sincere believers witness these worlds earlier than non-believers do. Some people pass the intermediate world easily and some with great difficulty. It is very easy for the Imāms and Friends of God because they transcend the intermediate and Resurrection worlds, experience the Bridge (*ṣirāt*), and witness paradise and hell in this world. They reach the station of annihilation in God and then return to this world to inform and guide us.

When they asked the Prophet about the timing [of the Day of Resurrection], he replied, "*It is possible that it may be nigh.*"[661] Obviously, people do not understand these profound realities of the world of the soul and their manifestations. How

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[659] Qur'an 16: 77.
[660] Qur'an 2: 259, 18: 45, 54: 55, and many other verses.
[661] Qur'an 17: 51.

else could the Prophet have described these issues that are the essence of all verses [of the Qur'an] to those people whose Resurrection is within them but they do not know it?

How eloquently the Qur'an explains this reality in the following verse: *"They say, 'When shall this promise come to pass, if you speak truly?' Say: 'The knowledge is with God; I am only a clear warner.' Then, when they see it nigh at hand, the faces of the unbelievers will be vexed, and it will be said, "This is what you were promised."*[662]

As the Prophet said, God alone knows the time of Resurrection, and He is only a Warner (*nadhīr*) to awaken the people to the consequences of infidelity, polytheism, hypocrisy, and evil deeds.

According to the Qur'an, man's deeds, good or evil, cannot be seen in this world but will be present in the world of Resurrection. As soon as actions are issued from a man, they appear in the intermediate and Resurrection worlds. But man cannot see them because the eye of his heart is covered by many veils in this world. When he dies and goes through these worlds he will see them all. *"The day every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward, and what it has done of evil; it will wish if there were only a far space between it and that day."*[663]

This wonderful verse alludes to this fact: *"And but for a Word that preceded from thy Lord until a stated term, it had been decided between them."*[664]

Indeed there is no distance between us and the Resurrection. It is only God's will that prevents us from seeing those worlds: *"And in the earth a sojourn shall be yours, and enjoyment for a time."*[665]

God ordained man to live on earth and enjoy its bounties for a while. Otherwise, people would have faced their reckoning, and there would have been no distance between them and the

[662] Qur'an 67: 25–27.
[663] Qur'an 3: 30.
[664] Qur'an 42: 14.
[665] Qur'an 2: 36.

Sublime Dominion, paradise, and hell. They could have seen themselves in heaven or hell while living on this earth.

There are verses in the Qur'an that state that on the Day of Reckoning the sinful will be asked how long their time on earth[666] lasted. They will reply, "Like an hour," although they experienced very hard times there. This answer indicates that when they enter into the world of Resurrection and realize that it encompasses the intermediate and the material worlds, then they understand that there is only one true world and their time in those worlds was indeed as short as an hour:

> *They will question thee concerning the Hour, when it shall berth. What art thou about, to mention it? Unto thy Lord is the final end of it. Thou art only the warner of him who fears it. It shall be as if; on the day they see it, they have but tarried for an evening, or its forenoon.*[667]

and,

> *It shall be as if on the day they see that they are promised, they had not tarried but for an hour of a single day.*[668]

Indeed, the world of Resurrection and reckoning is near, and heaven and hell encompass man here and now. Yet man cannot experience them because he is veiled, and like a very angry person burns in the fire of rage and commits thousands of evil deeds. Once he is freed of his anger he can understand what fire led him to those evils. A man driven by passion and appetite commits thousands of evil acts and falls below the animal state, but he cannot realize that until the fire of his appetite is extinguished. People are enslaved with anger and appetite. Love of money and fame prevents them from understanding the truth as well as the fire they are within. When their situation changes and divine light shines, they can understand how powerful the

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[666] As we mentioned before, the intermediate world is sometimes called *dunya* and sometimes "earth."

[667] Qur'an 79: 42–46.

[668] Qur'an 46: 35.

fire was. Being drunk on appetite and anger prevents them from feeling the burning of the fire because *"loving a thing causes blindness and deafness."* It prevents man from properly seeing and hearing others till the Day of Resurrection begins—*"It will not come on you but—suddenly!"*[669]—and brings everybody to God's presence: *"And that the final end is unto thy Lord."*[670] All must return to God. He is the final end and destination of all paths and travelers: *"O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him."*[671]

Every single person, believer and non-believer alike, must depart to God and meet Him. Divine light that emanates from His Unity illuminates the inward of all. All bounties He promised will be granted to man in His paradise:

> *Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide—blessed dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. And greater pleasure from Allah. This is the Supreme triumph.*[672]

for,

> *...and greater, God's good pleasure...*[673]

> *Therein you have abundant fruits, whereof you may eat.*[674]

All these bounties were indeed hidden within the souls and in the reality of a believer. But Glorious God grants them to him when it is the right time: *"None shall reveal it at its proper time, but He."*[675] God will reveal all these stations at the time when the souls are taken by God: *"And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord."*[676]

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669 Qur'an 7: 187.
670 Qur'an 53: 42.
671 Qur'an 84: 6
672 Qur'an 9: 72.
673 Qur'an 9: 72.
674 Qur'an 43: 71.
675 Qur'an 7: 187.
676 Qur'an 39: 69.

As to believers, the same applies to the sinful and non-believers as well. When divine light shines, they will understand the reality of their souls and discover torments awaiting them. This is like a vast desert, one side of which is barren, filled with mud and dirt, and the other side is a garden filled with flowers and orchards. The darkness of the night does not allow anything to be seen on either side. As soon as the sun rises, the reality of both sides becomes apparent.

The disclosure of the inward state of man necessitates the discovery of the truth and the removal of the veils so that man can realize that "God is the ultimate destination of all things, and the beginning of all beginnings, and the end of all ends, and He is God, praise belongs to Him alone, and *"Unto Him you shall return."*[677]

The coming of the Day of Reckoning will transform all things in such a way that cannot be imagined. The dawn of Resurrection contains all aspects of life in a different form and in God's presence:

And unto Him you shall be returned.[678]

To Him is the homecoming.[679]

Surely unto God all things come home.[680]

Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return.[681]

Lucky are those who traverse well on the right path of the Infallible Imāms and reach the desired destination, for following the Imāms is the way to salvation because they are those who actualized the truth within and became the Face of God (*wajhu'llah*). The closer someone gets to their way, the closer he will be to the truth, and the farther someone gets from them, the more distanced he will become from his reality. Man's

[677] Qur'an 29: 21.
[678] Qur'an 2: 245.
[679] Qur'an 5: 18.
[680] Qur'an 42: 53.
[681] Qur'an 2: 156.

conscience is the best criterion to judge the validity of this conclusion.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-First Discourse: Resurrection Is the World of Light and Illumination and the Manifestation of the Truth

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *They measure not God with His true measure. The earth altogether shall be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! High be He exalted above that they associate! For the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand, beholding. And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord, and the Book shall be set in place, and the Prophets and witnesses shall be brought, and justly the issue be decided between them, and they not wronged.*[682]

In previous chapters we discussed in detail the issues that pertain to the last moments of life in this world and the end of time, the intermediate world, and the ways in which the dead are revived and attend the Gathering Place (*maḥshar*). We will now turn to examine the events that according to the Qur'an and narrations we have at our disposal will take place on the Resurrection Day.

It was mentioned before that people will not be veiled [from one another] on the Day of Resurrection because that abode is not of time and matter. Now, it needs to be emphasized that it is the world of theophany and manifestation, the world of light rather than darkness. Therefore, although some people will remain veiled from others, all other beings of that realm will be unveiled and luminous, as the Qur'an says: "*And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord.*"[683]

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[682] Qur'an 39: 67–69.
[683] Qur'an 39: 69.

The book of the deeds of all will be put out, the prophets and witnesses will appear, and people will be judged fairly. *"They* [People] *measure not God with His true measure."* This means that they do not recognize the true power of God as it must be recognized. On the Day of Resurrection they will see that the earth and the sky are under His control. That realm is the realm of light and luminosity. It is also the realm of manifestation. Our world is one contained in time and space. Its existence is contingent upon time and space. If those two elements disappear, the material substance of the world also disappears. All things are bound by time and space, and by virtue of that limitation they remain veiled. If we took the weight (*thiqālat*) and density (*kethāfat*) out of this world, past and present would become meaningless, and this world would become like the other world. There will be identification between the visible and the invisible world. In the absence of matter, space, and time, all things are present and transparent to one another. Now imagine that the world is like a crystal ball, and every single part of it is visible to the rest. The other world and human beings there are like the crystal ball. People can perceive others as they perceive themselves. There is nothing hidden. Since the light is shining and each crystal reflects the light to others, the entire universe will become transparent and luminous.

When Imām 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, was asked about the peculiar features of the Highest Realm that is the abode of angels, intellects, and detached beings, he replied:

> God created man and There are forms without matter, transcendentals without potential. [God] revealed Himself to them and they became luminous. He manifested Himself to them and they became radiant. He put in their natures His example and demonstrated through them His deeds. He created man with a rational soul. If they purify it through knowledge and good deeds, they shall resemble Him in His substance. If they maintain their nature in harmony and

> balance and avoid the extremes, they will share [with Him] that which exists in the seven heavens.[684]

Now, let us take a closer look at Imām 'Ali's statement. According to him in the highest realm there are forms without matter. Since there is no matter there, there is no time, because matter necessitates the presence of time. Those beings in that abode are purely actualized beings who lack potentialities and move towards perfection: that is to say, every moment their potentialities are actualized until they attain absolute perfection. Their example is like that of a seed of a fruit that in a proper environment is actualized into roots, trunk, leaves, and finally fruit.

All beings of our world actualize their potentialities by means of change and transformation (*khal' va labas*)[685]and move towards perfection. Moving towards perfection is a characteristic of this world. Although in the intermediate world also the soul moves towards perfection, that is still a continuation of perfections man has attained in the world. In the Resurrection world, however, motion and perfection do not exist, and any soul that reaches that world has actualized all its potentialities and reached the utmost degree of its perfection.

Angels in that plane of existence have already reached their perfection. Each angel is assigned a particular task and function with no chance to disobey or waste time. These are characteristics of beings in the supreme world that have no material limitations and attain complete peace and serenity.

[God] manifested Himself to them, that is to say, He revealed Himself in the mirror of their ipseity (*huwīyah*) and

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[684] Amudi, *Ghurar wa durar*, with commentary by Aqa Jamal Khuwansari, Vol. 4, pp. 218–220.

[685] *Khal'* means taking off, removing, and *lobs* means putting on [i.e. clothes].The term is used with the same meaning as *kawn va fasād*. It denotes change and transformation from one spiritual state to a new state of spiritual existence. See Mohammad Moi'īn, *Farhang-i Fārsī*, 2d. ed., Tehran, 1386/2007. See pp. 430 and 1037.

quiddity (*māhiyah*), which are their archetypes (*a'yān-i thābitah*); or, to use a Gnostic term, God, the Possessor of Majesty and Measure (*dhawi'l 'izzah wa'l miqdār*) revealed Himself to them, and then they became luminous and radiant. God placed in their being His own example, which means His Attributes and Names were manifested in them. In other words, He showed His Qualities through their beings. It is for this reason that God acts through them, because He placed His own Names and Attributes in them and His actions were manifested by them. Therefore, all the actions in the higher world (*'ālam-i 'ilwī*) are indeed a manifestation of God's Attributes and Names that come from His nature.

God created man with a rational soul and gave him superiority over all creatures. If man purifies his soul through knowledge and good deeds, and maintains his nature in harmony and balance and avoids the extremes, he will begin to look like his original substance in the beginning of his creation and will be united with purified and luminous beings of the higher world.

If a man can maintain moderation in life and detach himself from his passions and appetite or illusions, and use those faculties in moderation and in accordance with his intellect and his heavenly rational faculty, in such a case he will participate in the life of [beings] who reside in the sevenfold heavens. In other words, such a man will ascend the seven heavens and like their inhabitants will attain detached attributes and simple (*basīt*) actions. Ḥakīm Sabzawārī expressed this idea in the following poem:

> The detached beings of the higher world (*al-mufāriqāt*) are not veiled
> Veil belongs to the beings of the lower world (*al-muqarināt*)
> In the first realm all beings are present in form
> And each form is the locus of manifestation of the other.

According to his comments all beings of the higher world are like mirrors that face each other. Each mirror reflects another mirror while is itself reflected in another mirror as well.

This interpretation refers to Aristotle when he said: "all beings in the higher world are pure light because they are in the company of the Supreme Light." This is why each of them sees all other things in the substance of the others. In other words, the many are in the One and the One is present in the many. The Light that shines over them all is infinite.[686] Sabzawārī added an annotation to the poem:

> All is present in all. That which is present in the intellects and higher beings in the origins of the creation is present in the intellects that are the ends of the creation. They are like brothers in the truth and purity because they are united in direction, belief, good deeds, and virtues—the whole is in the whole, the whole in the One, and each single one of them is a whole. In other words, the Particular is present in the Universal and the Universal is present in the Particular.

And Rūmī said:

> We were simple and of one substance all,
> we were all without head and foot in the beyond,
> when the pure light took form
> it became numbers like the shadows of a niched battlement,
> tear down the niched battlement with the mangonel,
> so that the differences will disappear from this squadron.[687]

In the process of ascension and perfection when man reaches the higher world, which is the realm of pure light, he sees all things contained in him because in that realm the veil of matter, such as time and space, does not exist. Therefore, when he arrives in that realm all realities of the world of intellect and form and knowledge will be contained within him.

As man was simple and pure in the beginning of creation and lived in a place where there was nothing else but God and multiplicity was non-existent, at the end he shall return to the same state. When the rational soul descended from the realm of Unity where divine light encompassed all things, he entered the

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[686] *Sharh-e manẓūmah*, printed by Naseri, p. 191.
[687] Rumi, *Mathnawī*, I, 33.

world of form and multiplicity, and like the pure light that is reflected through the creation of battlements on a building, it found multiplicity, and differences appeared.

With the mangonel of spiritual will and resolve on the path of God and through purifying the soul and journeying to meet God, man must destroy this battlement and remove the duality and selfhood (*inānīyah*) so that he can attain the same station in the realm of unity that he originally possessed, and like the shining sun illuminate all the world. Whether man wants it or not, we shall return, and it is determined; therefore, it is better if we move willingly, as Ḥāfiẓ states:

> I am the servant under the blue sky
> of him who is free of all attachments
> They are calling you from the battlement of the Throne
> I wonder what brought you into this trap
> O you are the high flying falcon, your place is on the Lote Tree
> And not in an unknown corner of this ruined house of affliction.[688]

As we mentioned before, the Day of Return (*Ma'ād*) is determined, as the Qur'an says: "*surely we belong to God, and to Him we return.*"[689] The question is what kind of a world is it to which we return? It is the world of theophany, the world of unveiling. As the Qur'an says, it is "*the day when the secrets are tried*";[690] all secrets, the hidden dimensions of man's soul, and his intentions will be revealed. Our eyes in this world are veiled so we cannot see except what is just in front of us. God

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[688] Ḥāfiẓ, *Divān*.

غلام همت انم که زیر چرخ کبود
ز هرچه رنگ تعلق پذیرد ازاد است
ترا ز کنگره عرش میزنند صفیر
ندانمت که در این دامگه چه افتادست
که ای بلند نظر شاهباز سدره نشین
نشیمن تو نه این کنج محنت اباد است

[689] Qur'an 2: 156.
[690] Qur'an 86: 9.

tells His Messenger, "*and so thy sight today is piercing*,"[691] that is to say, [on that day] man's eyes will be piercing and he will be able to see the inward and the outward, the visible and the invisible worlds, to read minds and thoughts, to learn all the knowledge of the past and the future, and that which was from the beginning, and that which will be at the end. Why is it so? Because "*the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord.*"

The Messenger's heart, his substance, his innermost secrets, and his soul were illuminated, enlightened by divine light. The vision of beings of the higher world is penetrating. It is different from the vision of the people of this world, because this world is a distorted abode, "*and unto Him you shall be returned.*"[692] This light is not like the luminosity of the sun that shines on earth only; rather, it originates from another Sun that shines and illuminates the heart and soul on the Day of Resurrection. This is the sun of *wilāyah* (God's guardianship) that originates from "*its Lord*" and illuminates the inner substance of the earth, that is to say, the souls, intellects, and reality of the rational soul, and turns everything transparent. It is like a crystal ball that is transparent inside and out. That is why their *houris* are described as "*as the likeness of hidden pearls.*"[693] The light of *wilāyah* shines in this way in the invisible worlds and the realm of the Greatest Resurrection of the Soul, and at such a moment "*Heaven is opened and becomes gates.*"[694] This material earth that was created from dirt and is gross will be transformed into a luminous earth. It will become all ears and eyes and intellect, obedient [to God] and His servant: "*Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens and they sally forth unto God, the One, the Omnipotent.*"[695]

People often think that life consists only of eating, drinking, breathing, and sleeping. The Hereafter is another abode; it is

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[691] Qur'an 50: 22.
[692] Qur'an 29: 21.
[693] Qur'an 56: 23.
[694] Qur'an 78: 19.
[695] Qur'an 14: 48.

pure life, intellect, and perception, and there is no death there that would descend upon it later. Rather, there is constant becoming, a constant death and rebirth: *"Surely the Last Abode is Life, did they but know."*[696]

Our life in this world is like an impure gold mixed with copper. Therefore, it is not a pure life based on pure intellect. We do not enjoy the qualities of luminosity that rational souls possess because our life is associated with vain play, preoccupation with illusions, and love of worthless worldly bounties, and our corporeal being is in constant change. In contrast, life in the Hereafter is pure. There is no death, sleep, or falsehood. When we sleep in this world, we lose our senses and perceptions, but in the Hereafter we are pure consciousness and knowledge. Our suffering in this world derives from the imperfection of life here. In the Hereafter, only felicity and pleasure exist: *"therein being whatever the souls desire, and the eyes delight in."*[697]

In the Hereafter man shall possess all acquired knowledge, and there is no reason to forget it or commit errors and sins. And all that exists is joy, pleasure, and felicity. It is a simple world overwhelmed by pure light because all that which caused darkness and density in this world will disappear, *"when earth is stretched out and casts forth what is in it, and voids itself."*[698]

The same situation also applies to the soul. All satanic forms, illusions, and worthless desires challenge the intellect that is present in the soul. As we say, "the battle of 72 nations" is a constant battle in the soul. In other words, the armies of Satan line up to fight the armies of God constantly. All these satanic forces must be killed so that the soul will become pure. This can be accomplished by defeating incoming thoughts by means of the divine Names so that the heart becomes purified and filled with divine light, so that like a magnet it can attract and absorb divine knowledge. In short, the heart must be cleansed from all things other than the simple Truth. Imām Zayn

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696 Qur'an 29: 64.
697 Qur'an 43: 71.
698 Qur'an 83: 3–4.

al-'Ābidīn Sajjād commented on the Qur'anic verse mentioned above (*"Upon the day the earth shall be changed to other than the earth"*) in the following terms:

> [That verse] refers to the earth where there were no sins committed on it; no mountain or plant covered it as the form that God created for in the beginning. God will place His Throne on water as *"it was on water at the first moment of creation,"*[699] with its independent power and majesty.[700] Then His power manifested itself in the world of multiplicity and different forms appeared. Once again this world will roll up and people will walk towards pure life and power. All beings shall return to their origin where there is nothing but God's, as it is said, *"There will be none in the House except the Lord of the House."* It is only then that man can understand what the Qur'an says, *"Whose is the Kingdom today? God's, the One, the Omnipotent."*[701]

In his monumental commentary on the Qur'an, our revered master, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, interprets Imām Sajjād's statement to denote the *"Divine Throne was placed on water,"* because there is some evidence that water is used as a metaphor in the Qur'an and refers to divine Power and Majesty, and the source of life. When forms descend on water, multiplicity appears. When forms disappear, all created beings will disappear, and the divine Throne will return to the water. Therefore, the meaning of the verse denotes that only then can man perceive God's Power, Knowledge, and Majesty.

Alas, all these arguments and discussions are to awaken man to understand and believe that there is only One Omnipotent God, and no other being is able to intervene in His absolute governance; it has always been this way and still is, and will be, as it is said, "*Kān'Allah wa mā kana ma 'ahu sha'yan. Alān kamā kān.*" We cannot assume independent existence for any beings in the world of multiplicity and regard them as partners

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[699] Qur'an 11: 7.
[700] *Tafsir-e Qumī*, pp. 580–581.
[701] Qur'an 40: 16.

to God: in the Hereafter they will all perish and God will remain. All prophets and Infallible Imāms struggled against this sort of polytheistic notion that prevailed among the people. They invited people to the Oneness of God in the manner that was described. Regrettably, man remembers this reality only when he is afflicted with pain and problems, and once they are over, falls into the snare of forgetfulness again.

To avoid these kinds of afflictions in the world, man takes refuge in religion and its injunctions and utters that "He is the King of the Day of Doom." (*Mālik-i yawm al-Dīn*).[702] But it is only in the Hereafter that veils are removed and he perceives with his soul and his intellect and utters with his tongue that the Kingdom belongs to Him alone, saying, "*We believe and we are sincere.*"

In this world man sees the signs of God's creation and Power and then believes in Him. Man takes his existence as the proof of God and His Power. In the Hereafter man perceives God and His Attributes, and by virtue of that perception becomes conscious of the existence of all other things, and realizes that heaven and earth are all His dominion. Obviously, this is known to God, but lest man claim perfect faith, He puts them on trial so that man knows his place in the universe: "*Alif Lam Mim. Do the people reckon that they will be left to say 'we believe,' and will not be tried?*"[703]

Also, the manifestation of God's Attributes and Names in the Hereafter is to give a chance to non-believers and those who deny Him and not to prove the existence of these Attributes in Him.

In this world man is imprisoned in different kinds of veils. When he is exposed to beings of the higher realms, he realizes that nothing but pure light exists in that abode.

First is the eternal light that illuminates the place where detached and simple beings are. These are beings that are pure souls, transcendent and formless. Then the light descends to the realm of form and man sees how it illuminates particular Names

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[702] Qur'an 1: 4.
[703] Qur'an 29: 1–2.

and illuminates the angels in the realm of form, and then descends all the way down. It is to this process that the statement of the Master of Believers (Imām 'Ali) refers: "If man keeps his nature in harmony and balance and avoids contradictions, then he can associate with and participate in [the turning] of the sevenfold heavens and supreme beings." As the Qur'an states, *"It is God who created seven heavens, and of earth their like, between them the Command descending, that you may know that God is powerful over everything and that God encompasses everything in knowledge."*[704]

Thus, it becomes clear that God's intention of creation of the heavens and the earth is just to have man realize His Power and Omniscience.

[704] Qur'an 65: 12.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Second Discourse

In the Hereafter Non-Believers Are Veiled

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord, and the Book shall be set in place, and the Prophets and witnesses shall be brought, and justly the issue be decided between them, and they not wronged.*[705]

In the previous chapter we explained that the Hereafter is the realm of light and luminosity. Therefore, beings are not veiled from each other; and everything is transparent there. The question that might arise is about the state of the evil-doers and the wretched who earned God's wrath in the world. Are they also luminous beings or are they immersed in darkness? If they are luminous beings like others, how can we explain their state if we are certain that God will punish the evil-doers in the Hereafter? And if they are gross and exist in darkness, how is that possible in an abode that is all light and luminous, an abode that is the realm of manifestation? The answer is that each soul's state in the Hereafter is the fruit of his or her deeds in this world: "*God charges no soul save to its capacity; standing to its account is what it has earned, and against its account what it has merited.*"[706] Man leaves this world with that which he earned and will see the result of his actions in the Hereafter: "*And that a man shall have to his account only as he has labored, and that his laboring shall surely be seen.*"[707]

Thus, the Hereafter is the abode of manifestation of deeds that man committed in this world. Even if he may attain some

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[705] Qur'an 39: 69.
[706] Qur'an 2: 286.
[707] Qur'an 53: 39–40.

degree of perfection in the intermediate world (*barzakh*), or a deed is recorded in his book of deeds after his death, still they are all the fruit of what he did in this world. Otherwise, no action takes place in the Hereafter, for it is not the world of action. As a *ḥadīth* says, "Today is the day of action and not reckoning, tomorrow (the Day of Resurrection) is the day of reckoning and not action."[708] Thus man has an opportunity in this world to change his deeds, or his evil intentions, ideas, and desires that pull him in different directions. However, with his death, his life will be sealed and the book of his deeds will be closed. He will go through reckoning on the basis of his deeds in the world.

Those people who did not search for divine Knowledge in this world and committed sins and oppression will not possess light and luminosity in the Hereafter, as their souls were in darkness in this world, and a veil always separated them from the truth. A person whose soul is dark in this world will be in the dark wherever he goes, as the Qur'an states:

> *And to whomsoever God assigns no light, no light has he.*[709]

> *And whosoever is blind in this world shall be blind in the world to come, and he shall be even further astray from the way.*[710]

Obviously, the blindness that the Qur'an alludes to is not of the physical eyes but is blindness of the heart, because in the Hereafter there is no blindness: "*It is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts within the breast.*"[711]

Spiritual blindness is far more important than physical blindness. The heart that loses its perception and ability to attain knowledge as a result of its immersion in appetites is truly blind, because it is captured by temptations and illusions. The man who is spiritually blind will be blind in the Hereafter. The man who whose inner eye is not guided by the adornment of [divine]

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[708] *Biḥār al-anwār*, lithograph edition, Vol. 77, p. 425.
[709] Qur'an 24: 40.
[710] Qur'an 17: 72.
[711] Qur'an 22: 46.

guidance has not perceived the mysteries of the universe and has not trusted God, but has followed the command of his carnal soul and has blinded himself spiritually in this world. His heart will be veiled and he will remain blind in the Hereafter as well. Such men will be addressed on the Day of Resurrection from a distance: "*they are called from a far place.*"[712] Their heart is taken over by density and darkness. They imagine that because they lived a prosperous life in this world, they will have a high station in proximity to God in the Hereafter as well. They do not hear the warning of the Qur'an: "*No indeed; but that they were earning has rusted upon their hearts. No indeed; but upon that day they shall be veiled from their Lord.*"[713] Such density and darkness prevent them from attaining proximity to God or understanding the true meaning of the Qur'an: "*What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts?*"[714]

The heart that is negligent in remembering God is in a constant state of anxiety and fear. Such a heart is always preoccupied with family and wealth and is susceptible to unpleasant experiences, satanic thoughts, and spiritual crises:

> *Whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall be a life of narrowness, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind. He shall say, "O my Lord, why hast thou raised me blind, and I was wont to see?" God shall say, "Even so it is. Our signs came unto thee, and thou didst forget them; and so today thou art forgotten."*[715]

One who does not relate to God and does not remember Him or entrust Him with his life is an affliction in this world. He may be very wealthy and powerful, but his life is miserable and his soul in pain. Such a man will be blind and veiled in the Hereafter and will wonder why he is so while he was not blind in the world. He does not realize that blindness in this world and in the

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[712] Qur'an 41: 44.
[713] Qur'an 83: 14–15.
[714] Qur'an 47: 24.
[715] Qur'an 20: 124–126.

Hereafter are two different categories, and questions God for this reason. Since he was not blind in the world, he presumes that it must be the same in the Hereafter. He will be reminded that the eye of the heart is different from the physical eye, and that his blindness is the consequence of a veil over his spirit, although God warned him frequently in the world. The above verse clearly explains that a man who lived in disobedience and did not observe the injunctions of religion dies in the same state. He will die blind in this world as well as in the Hereafter. Even if the entire universe were filled with light and became luminous, it would have no benefit for a blind man.

> *...upon the day when thou seest the believers, men and women, their light running before them, and on their right hands. "Good tidings for you today! Gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell for ever; that is indeed the mighty triumph." Upon the day when the hypocrites, men and women, shall say to those who have believed, "Wait for us, so that we may borrow your light!" It shall be said, "Return you back behind, and seek for a light!"*[716]

Those who are luminous in the Hereafter took light there from this world. The hypocrites have no light in the Hereafter. They claim to be Muslims and speak in defense of Islam but have no faith, and their hearts are in a rebellious state. They live in a deeper darkness than infidels and polytheists. They come in complete darkness on the Judgment Day as "*Shadows piled one upon another.*"[717] "*Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest reach of the Fire.*"[718]

In the world of Resurrection the hypocrites will ask the faithful to "*Look on us that we borrow from your light.*"[719] and give them some of their light, but their answer will be, "*Go back*

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[716] Qur'an 57: 12–3.
[717] Qur'an 24: 40.
[718] Qur'an 4: 145.
[719] Qur'an 57: 13.

and seek for light,"[720] as there is no chance to earn light in the Hereafter. There believers shall rest in the vast ocean of divine Mercy while the hypocrites will be thirsty for a drop of water. However, God is just and leaves no excuse for anyone. As the Qura'n states:

For that God is never unjust unto His servants.[721]

We never chastise, until We send forth a Messenger.[722]

As for the believers, they are always luminous and their reward will be with them. Each one will benefit from this light in accordance with his capacity and faith; *"They have their wage, and their light"*;[723] some are fully immersed in light, *"light upon light."*[724] There is a Qur'anic verse that describes the connection between faith and light and life. According to this verse, faith is life and light, and he who believes in God and does righteous deeds is always alive. The rest of the people are dead. *"Why, is he who was dead, and We gave him life, and appointed for him a light to walk by among the people as one whose likeness is in the shadows, and comes not forth from them? So it is decked out fair to the unbelievers the things they have done."*[725]

As the verse indicates, faith is light and life. True life means having knowledge, self-consciousness, and a connection to the Giver of Life. The man of faith lives among the people, and all their acts are with God's light. Their deeds are based on insight and consciousness. Other people are ignorant and their hearts are taken over by uncertainty and covered by the veil of ignorance. Their deeds are aimless and based on doubt and illusion. They move between doubt and conjecture and never

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[720] Ibid.
[721] Qur'an 3: 182.
[722] Qur'an 17: 15.
[723] Qur'an 57: 19.
[724] Qur'an 24: 35.
[725] Qur'an 6: 122.

enter the abode of knowledge and certainty: "*In their doubt they go this way and that.*"[726]

In contrast, the people of faith manage life with discernment, thoughtfulness, and contemplation and walk with a firm step and confidence on the path of life. Are these two groups equal?

The man who does not know God is hostile to his parents, his family, and his environment and feels alienated from the world. Since he is not connected to God he sees all other beings disconnected from God and independent of Him. In contrast, a man of God sees all things intimately connected to God.

One harvests that which one plants. God nurtures and make every deed of man look more important. If he does a good deed, God will expand it, and if he commits evil, He will make it bigger. The Qur'an states, "*Each We succor, these and those, from thy Lord's gift; and thy Lord's gift is not confined.*"[727] God grants every man, in accordance with his capacity, anything he asks Him for. His Generosity is not finite and conditional or limited. Guidance comes from Him, and each man is free to accept or reject it. God will give him the strength in the path that he chooses. "*Surely We guided him upon the way whether he be thankful or unthankful.*"[728]

There are people who are eternally in the dark and cannot escape from that state. Their example is that of those who are "*as one whose likeness is in the shadows, and comes not forth from them.*" The verse clearly states that this category of human beings lives in the dark and their souls are taken over by darkness: "*And the unbelievers—their protectors are idols that bring them forth from the light into the shadows; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.*[729]

Obviously the state that the verse describes does not denote physical and external light or darkness, but spiritual, and the light and darkness denote the state of the soul. Every action of

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[726] Qur'an 9: 45.
[727] Qur'an 17: 20.
[728] Qur'an 76: 3.
[729] Qur'an 2: 257.

the faithful is a step towards more light and expansion of it. God protects and nourishes him and bring him to His sacred sanctuary.

Similarly, every action of those who turn away from God is a step towards darkness. Their guides and leaders are *ṭāqūt*, that is, those who rebel [against God]. They avoid accepting responsibility for being human, not knowing that they cannot escape from God except to Him. A partridge that puts its head deep in the snow remains in ignorance and thinks that hunters cannot see it. In reality it is the partridge that cannot see the hunter. The non-believers hide behind the veil of ignorance and negligence thinking that God cannot see them. They escape from God and immerse themselves in worldly delights and transient pleasures. The *ṭāqūt* also pulls them more and more into the abode of darkness until they get drawn into absolute darkness and become infidels. They become the companions of fire and remain there forever, as the Qur'an says: "*Those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.*" Since hell symbolizes distance from God, those who are there will be living in darkness forever. So in the Hereafter, which is the realm of light, still some people will live in permanent darkness. We must emphasize that the world unto itself is not a veil, but non-believers are veiled from it by virtue of their nature. They waste their lives in this world and therefore are veiled from [the reality of] the Hereafter.

The same rule applies to deception and falsehood. The Hereafter is the realm of truth. Deception and falsehood have no place there. Yet those who lied and swindled in the world think that they can do the same thing in the Hereafter. God warned the Prophet against them:

> *Behold how they lie against themselves, and how that which they were forging has gone astray from them!*[730]

[730] Qur'an 6: 24.

Upon the day when God shall raise them up all together, and they will swear to Him, as they swear to you, and think they are on something. Surely, they are the liars![731]

This false pledge indeed is an extension of their dishonest nature in the world that will manifest itself in the Hereafter. Those for whom lying and dishonesty has become a second nature in the world enter the Hereafter with the same traits. It is proven philosophically as well as in practice that any trait that becomes a second nature for a man is adopted by his soul, and he enters the Day of Gathering (*maḥsahr*) with that trait.

The question that may be posed here is that if the Resurrection Day is the realm of light and transparency, why is it that dishonesty and denial still prevail there, and its inhabitants are veiled from seeing the light and the truth? Why is it that in the realm of pure light and truth these traits continue to exist?

As we mentioned in a previous discourse, manifestation of light is hierarchical. When it shines upon the detached souls, it is very intense and luminous. As it descends to lower planes of creation, it loses its luminosity accordingly. It is much stronger in the first plane than in the last. In each plane of contingent entification more veils are added to it.

Undoubtedly, the wretched (*ashqiyā*) and the blissful (*su'adā*) reside in different planes of existence in the Hereafter. Their status depends on the presence or absence of veils on the basis of their good or evil deeds in the world. Those who fell into infidelity and polytheism, committed sins, and denied the truth will be distanced from divine Mercy and live in darkness and behind many veils.

This is indeed the true meaning of the verse *"they are called from a far place."* The Companions of the Left (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*) also have different grades of existence there because they vary in the degree of wretchedness. Prophets and Infallible Imāms attract pure light and receive it from God directly and without any intermediary. Those who are brought nigh to God,

[731] Qur'an 18: 58.

people of sincerity (*mukhlisīn*), people of good deeds (*abrār*), and the Companions of the Right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) each have their share of light in accordance with their stations, as it is noted in the Qur'an: *"none of us is there, but has a known station."*[732]

As is understood, the wretched are also in the realm of light but are veiled and protected by God's Names of Majesty and Power, whereas believers, people of good deeds, and those who are brought nigh all are under divine light and protection of God's Names of Beauty and Mercy. They all attend the feast extended by the King, but there is a world of difference between the two groups in terms of their relationship with God.

On the Day of Judgment believers and people of good deeds will be under the light of the splendid Divine Names such as the Most Merciful (al-Raḥīm), the Clement (al-Ra'ūf), the Friend (al-Wadūd), and the Possessor of Bounty and Generosity (Dhu'l Mann Wa'lkaram) whereas all non-believers and the wretched will be under the light of the Divine Names of Majesty, such as the Severe in Punishment (Shadīd al-'Iqāb), the Compeller (al-Jabbār), the Crusher (al-Qahhār) and the like. All however, will be in full submission and have no possibility of disobedience or rebellion and denial. Their distance or proximity to heaven and hell will be determined in accordance with their movement towards perfection.

The shining and luminous nature of light cannot be denied. But often it is veiled by the desires of the carnal soul. It is narrated that there was a discussion between 'Ammār ibn

[732] Qur'an 37: 174.

Yāsir[733] and Mughayrah ibn Shu'abah.[734] When the Commander of Faithful ('Ali) heard their debate, he said to 'Ammār, "Leave him alone, 'Ammār! He will not take anything from religion except that which can help him in the world. He deliberately misleads his soul so that he can offer excuses and justify his wrong-doings."[735]

The Imām's assessment [of human error] is amazing. Man justifies his wrong-doings with irrelevant debates and illusive reasons and relieves himself of responsibility and the blame of the people. This is the utmost degree of inner hypocrisy, to deliberately pretend that he does not know any better. Such a man criticizes people when they do good deeds and praises people when they commit evil. He uses his religion like a tool to attain worldly objectives. The Master of Martyrs (*Sayyid al-Shuhadā'*) [Imām Ḥusayn] described these people as follows: "[Such] People are slaves of the world. Religion for them is like a drop of water on their tongues. They defend religion only as much as it provides for their worldly needs. When the time of trial comes it will be shown how few in number the [true] believers are."[736] This is the [worst] kind of darkness within light and blindness within vision. Such people will be resurrected with the same qualities and traits.

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[733] One of the Companions of the Prophet who migrated to Medina and the man who suggested to the Prophet that he build a mosque in Quba. This was the first mosque ever built. After 632 he joined 'Ali and supported him and fought on his side in the Battle of Siffīn, where he was killed. See ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharh nahj al-balāghah*, V. See also Reckendorf, H. "'Ammār ibn Yāsir," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, I: 448. Leiden: Brill, 1986, and Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[734] One of the most controversial and questionable figures of the first century of Islam. He entered Islam while the Prophet was alive and participated in several major battles. He was appointed as the governor of Basrah and then Kufa, and finally made an alliance with Mu'āwiyah. See Anjuman-i Āsār-i Mellī, *Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Thaqafi Khufi*, Tehran: 1353/1974, p. 569.

[735] *Nahj al-balāghah*, Wisdom No. 405, Vol. 2, p. 213, edited by Abduh, published in Egypt.

[736] *Tuhuf al-uqul*, p. 245.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Third Discourse

Man Is Resurrected and Stands in God's Presence

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *By the swift scatterers and the burden-bearers and the smooth runners and the partitioners, surely that you are promised is true, and surely the Doom is about to fall!*[737]

In these verses God addresses and swears to the most important natural phenomena to tell us that the Day of Doom that is promised is real. It is not an illusion or imagining that the prophets invented by themselves as a theory to convince the people and set limits and control over their unbridled desires and transgressions.

Ma'ād denotes our Return to God. Since the Return is to God, it must have come from God in the first place, for it could not be called "Return" otherwise. Man cannot return to a place from which he did not come. We have come from God and must return to the same place we came from: "*As He originated you so you will return*"[738] and, "*As We originated the first creation, so We shall bring it back again*"[739] Therefore, all creatures, human beings, animals, and everything else will *return* to the realm whence they originated.

Man descended upon earth with his soul and body. His *Return* to his origin will be complete only if he returns with all his being. Otherwise, he would leave some aspects of his being on earth. "*Then unto Me you shall return, and I shall tell you what you were doing.*"[740]

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[737] Qur'an 51: 106.
[738] Qur'an 7: 29.
[739] Qur'an 21: 104.
[740] Qur'an 31: 15.

This world is not created in vain, and man is not exempt from trials and reckoning in it, whether he knows or pretends not to know. Loqmān,[741] who was one of the most eminent sages in human history and in some records was known to be a prophet, advised his son in the following terms: "O my Son! If anything is given life and existence [by God], even if it is a seed of mustard in the middle of a rock or in heaven or earth, God will bring it [back on the Day of Resurrection/Judgment]; He is the Subtle (al-Laṭīf) and All-Aware (al-Khabīr)."

In other words, not a single particle in the universe is hidden from God or beyond His Knowledge, Power, and Dominion. Then how is it that man can claim that his existence, thoughts, and actions are hidden from God's Knowledge and Power? His existence in the contingent world is necessarily connected to his Return. Therefore, one who denies the validity of *Return* is in a sense denying his own existence. Whether man denies the Return or not, God will revive man and resurrect him by His Power and actualize his return.

Despite this, some people deny the existence of spirit and the reality of the Return and believe that human existence is limited to man's corporeal being: *"There is nothing but our present life; we die, and we live, and we shall not be raised up."*[742]

This is how those people denied the reality of *Ma'ād* and became non-believers. Some others viewed *Ma'ād* as an impossibility, arguing that nobody has returned [from the Hereafter] to report about it. Still some others argued that the idea of *Ma'ād* is a product of the prophets' imagination, whereby they could control the unbelievers, bring their wild nature under control, and prevent hostility. These are, in a nutshell, the arguments that materialists present in refutation of

[741] Loqmān Ḥakīm is a legendary figure and the symbol of wisdom in Islamic culture. Reportedly he was a slave initially who was freed because of his piety and extreme knowledge. God offered him the choice between wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and prophethood. He chose to be a man of wisdom (*ḥakīm*). Chapter 31 of the Qur'an was revealed in his name.
[742] Qur'an 23: 37.

Ma'ād when they debate with believers. The answer to their argument is that they simply have no proof or reason to refute the reality of Return other than illusions and sophistic arguments.

Why should man wonder and doubt the idea of *Ma'ād*? If man reflects on his own creation, that he was a sperm, and then turned into a clot, and then bones and flesh, and that he went through perfection in a mother's womb, became able to breathe, and then acquired perception and intellect, and finally was born, he would be bewildered. To understand the processes of human perfection is truly amazing. A drop of sperm that cannot be seen except by the help of a microscope is seemingly a simple thing. Yet, in the process it is transformed into a sophisticated being with a complicated physical constitution and working system. How did this sperm move towards existence and constantly transform until it became a sophisticated human being? What is it that makes the human brain so efficient that it can direct all different faculties such as memory, thinking, loving, and fearing, etc.? Yet all this is the physical appearance of man.

> *We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop, in a receptacle secure, then We created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in flesh; thereafter We produced him as another creature. So blessed be God, the fairest of creators!*[743]

Praise belongs to the Greatest Creator, the All-Wise. Who else but God is capable of doing all this? Can anyone deny it? Is God, the Creator of all things, incapable of reviving the dead? What is so impossible about that?

> *O men, if you are in doubt as to the Uprising, surely We created you of dust, then of a sperm-drop, then of a blood clot, then of a lump of flesh, formed and unformed that We may make clear to you. And We establish in the wombs what We will, till a stated term, then We deliver you as infants,*

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[743] Qur'an 23: 12–14.

> *then that you may come of age; and some of you die, and some of you are kept back unto the vilest state of life, that after knowing somewhat, they may know nothing. And thou beholdest the earth blackened, then, when We send down water upon it, it quivers, and swells, and puts forth herbs of every joyous kind. That is because God—He is the Truth, and brings the dead to life, and is powerful over everything, and because the Hour is coming, no doubt of it, and God shall raise up whosoever is within the tombs.*[744]

Indeed, all these events and processes are testimonies to the truthfulness of God and His Oneness. All this takes place with such an amazing speed and in a mother's womb. One can only imagine if these processes were to take place in accordance with the laws of substantial motion: it would take millions of years till dust could be transformed into a human being, whereas God makes all this possible in a fraction of that time. All these warnings are for man to know and get closer to God and journey to Him sincerely, honestly, and with contemplation and reflection. Man must reflect how such a helpless fetus settles in a mother's womb while she conducts her life in a normal way until the designated moment arrives. Then preparations are made for her to give birth, each [newborn] different from another, manifesting different Names and Attributes of God; "*then that you may come of age; and some of you die, and some of you are kept back unto the vilest state of life.*" Then he gets old and weak and loses all power and memory as though he never possessed them. This will be the lowest point in life when man becomes like dead land in winter—"*And thou beholdest the earth blackened*"—and then [God revives] him as he revives the dead land with rain after winter ends and spring starts; "*then, when We send down water upon it, it quivers, and swells, and puts forth herbs of every joyous kind.*"

If we pay close attention and examine the physical world, especially with the help of modern technological instruments, we will discover a universe in motion outwardly, let alone if we contemplate the realm of spirit. Every particle in this universe,

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[744] Qur'an 22: 5–7.

in accordance with its capacity, possesses intelligence of its own, knows its parallels and opposite, and struggles for survival. What is it that gives life to the dead earth? Who created this earth, human beings, animals, and plants, each of which is truly a universe unto itself? *"That is because God—He is the Truth, and brings the dead to life, and is powerful over everything."*

Man must take heed and never allow the veil of forgetfulness to make him forget who he is, and that all these things exist the way they do by the grace of God, and all depend on His Power, praised and Most High is He. We brought these examples just to show that He is the Truth, and in the same manner can easily bring back the dead to life, and He is capable of doing that which He wills.

What does it mean to create out of the dead earth the beautiful flowers and the nightingale, and grant it the ability to sing lovely songs that uplift man's soul and evoke love for God in his heart? "There are so many signs and allusions in the realm of existence. Yet people think that they are meaningless signs engraved on the wall."[745] God is constantly reviving the dead, creating flowers and nightingales, rain and snow, heat and cold. All these as well as the bringing back to life of all that was dead, including man—all of these are signs of His infinite Power as He revives the dead, because *"He is powerful over everything."*

> The Beloved Friend is revealing Himself on every door and every wall. O people of insight! He is manifesting Himself every moment.
>
> You are searching to find a candle, while the sun is shining.
>
> The day is clear and luminous, but you are in the dark of the night. If you free yourself from the darkness of your existence you will witness that the entire universe is the rising point of the lights.[746]

[745] Sa'adī, *Divān*, #25.
[746] Hatif Isfahani, "*tajī 'iband*," in *Divān.*

That is why when a believer realizes all this, he utters, "*He is powerful over everything.*" When one comes to this realization, one has indeed acquired all His Names and Attributes. He realizes that it is not only man who was created for a purpose; rather, every fly, every mosquito, and every iota in creation is created for a purpose, and possesses all the qualities that man claims. They live and die and invoke God, as the Qur'an says:

> *No creature is there crawling on the earth, no bird flying with its wings, but they are nations like unto yourselves. We have neglected nothing in the Book; then to their Lord they shall be mustered.*[747]

> Not only man gives testimony to His Oneness,
> But every nightingale which sings on a tree branch,
> sings in testimony to His Oneness.[748]

Man experiences death and Resurrection every time he sleeps and wakes up. The marvel of death and Resurrection is not any different from sleeping and waking up. Every day man encounters millions of amazing and marvelous phenomena. Very simple acts such as speech, hearing, and perceiving are miraculous acts. The descent of concepts and meanings from the depth of the soul to the mind to the tongue is a miracle, as is the ascension of speech through the faculty of hearing to the mind and the soul. The current of the blood through the vessels and the feeding of the cells and their functioning and the constant beating of the heart are all miracles, although we tend to take the regular functioning of these organs for granted. When something out of the ordinary happens, we take it as a sign of God's Power and a miracle. That is because man is not familiar with rare and unusual events and sees them as miracles, whereas God's Power extends to rare events as it does to miraculous ones, but man's short-sightedness prevents him from realizing that. If one ever wants to understand God's infinite Power, the

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[747] Qur'an 6: 38.

[748] Sa'adī, *Divān*, #12.

entire universe and every single phenomenon is a manifestation of God's Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom. Is there anything or any place that is truly outside of His Power and Wisdom so that we could seek His Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom there?

We observe all these in our daily life but never wonder why they are the way they are. However, when the question of death and Resurrection is discussed, we deny its possibility and raise a thousand questions because we do not believe that it is possible [for God] to do so; therefore we deny it. This is nothing new, and materialist thinkers have always done so. *"They say, 'What, when we have gone astray in the earth, shall we indeed be in a new creation?'"*[749] And the answer to their question is, *"Say: 'Death's angel, who has been charged with you, shall gather you, then to your Lord you shall be returned.'"*[750]

Man's body will perish, but his reality will remain. He is clay first, then is transformed to a drop, then to clot and to flesh and bones, and finally is born to this world and is given the power of speech and intellection. Then he goes through the processes of life, acquires power, and reaches maturity. Then he dies and goes to purgatory and remains there until the Day of Resurrection when body and spirit unite again and man stands with his very physical being for judgment. Returning the spirit to the body is easier for God than drinking a glass of water is for man. Therefore, one must never consider this an impossibility in light of God's infinite Power just because he believes it to be impossible; *"To God we belong and to Him is our return."*

Rūmī has eloquently described these processes in this poem:

I died from inanimate and became a plant
I died from a plant and became an animal
Then I died from an animal and became a man
Why should I fear death then,
did I ever become less by dying?

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[749] Qur'an 32: 10.
[750] Qur'an 32: 11.

Once again I will die as a man
So that I will rise and fly like angels
But I must go beyond angelhood
for "*Everything will perish save His Countenance.*"[751]
Once more I will sacrifice my angelhood
And will become that which cannot be contained in imagination
So I will become non-existence for Non-Existence
Sing to me in organ notes that "*Indeed to Him is our return.*"[752]

Man came to this world to learn, work, and make a living. But he must return with his hands full. Man will not rest in peace until he reaches his original abode, and that is in God's sanctuary, where the heart finds peace. The Messenger of God once said, "You were not created for extinction but were created to find subsistence [in God]. Indeed you will only be transferred from one abode to another."[753]

Indeed, man never experiences extinction and absolute non-existence. Rather, his life and death, his journey towards the intermediate world and the Hereafter, all is his journey to God and presence in His infinite Knowledge, Power, and eternity. In short, death is not man's loss but journey towards perfection.

O my Heart! How long in this abode of falsehood
Like children, you preoccupy yourself with vain play
You are that well-trained brave bird,

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[751] Qur'an 20: 88.

[752] Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, III.

از جمادی مردم و نامی شدم — وز نما مردم به حیوان برزدم
مردم از حیوانی و آدم شدم — پس چه ترسم کی ز مردن کم شدم
حملهٔ دیگر بمیرم از بشر — تا بر آرم از ملایک پر و سر
وز ملک هم بایدم جستن ز جو — کل شیء هالک الا وجهه
بار دیگر از ملک قربان شوم — آنچ اندر وهم ناید آن شوم
پس عدم گردم عدم چون ارغنون — گویدم که انا الیه راجعون

[753] As quoted in 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in an unpublished treatise on *Ma'ād* titled *Man's Life beyond this World*, p. 12, who quoted this *ḥadīth* on the authority of Shaykh Ṣadūq.

And your abode was beyond this world of dust
Why did you become stranger to that abode
And become like the lowly birds in this ruined world?
Open your wings and get away from companionship of the dust
Fly high! Fly till you reach the niched battlement of the cosmos.[754]

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[754] Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī. *Divān*. Tehran. 1341/1962.

دلا تا كي درين كاخ مجازي　　كني مانند طفلان خاكبازي؟
تويي آن دستپرور مرغ گستاخ　　كه بودت آشيان بيرون ازين كاخ
چرا ز آن آشيان بيگانه گشتي؟　　چو دونان جغد اين ويرانه گشتي؟
بيفشان بال و پر ز آميزش خاک　　بپر تا كنگر ايوان افلاک!

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Fourth Discourse

Unscientific Principles for the Denial of *Ma'ād* by Materialist Thinkers

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *The unbelievers say, "The Hour will never come to us." Say: "Yes indeed, by my Lord, it shall come to you, by Him who knows the Unseen; not so much as the weight of an ant in heaven and earth escapes from Him, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but it is in a Manifest Book; that He may recompense those who believe, and do righteous deeds; theirs shall be forgiveness and generous provision.*
>
> *And those who strive against Our signs to void them—theirs shall be a chastisement of painful wrath.*[755]

The arguments that materialist thinkers present to reject *Ma'ād* are not founded on any scientific evidence but are based on doubt and impossibility. In the science of logic, it is obvious that issues related to scientific certainty must be based on preliminary scientific proofs. A conclusion that establishes certainty necessitates the presence of proven preliminary evidence. This is called logical demonstration (*burhān*) and analogy (*qiyās*). A conclusion based on certainty is then used as the basis to prove other scientific principles. Obviously, if the preliminary principles of an issue are based on conjecture, surmise, and assumption and not on proven evidence, then the conclusion will not be based on logical demonstration and will therefore be uncertain.

The preliminary reason that materialist thinkers present to reject the idea of *Ma'ād* is not based on logical demonstration but is of the category of imagination and rhetoric. Therefore, it

[755] Qur'an 34: 3–5.

lacks validity or value. What we mean by "preliminary certainties" consists of introduction, observation, experience, and theory. All components of logical demonstration, whether visible or hidden, must have been proven already; otherwise, the conclusion will be uncertain, illusive, and based on conjecture. Such a conclusion lacks any degree of validity. The Qur'an makes it clear that the rejection of *Ma'ād* is based purely on conjecture: "*They say, 'There is nothing but our present life; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time destroys us.' Of that they have no knowledge; they merely conjecture.*"[756] In many verses of the Qur'an, following intellect to reach certainty is emphasized, and following conjecture and doubt is strongly condemned:

> *And pursue not that thou hast no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart—all of those shall be questioned of.*[757]

and,

> *And the most of them follow only surmise, and surmise avails naught against truth. Surely God knows the things they do.*[758]

Materialist thinkers and agnostics (*dahriyūn*) do not present any reason for their rejection of *Ma'ād* and the essential impossibility of such an event taking place. They take a shallow and passing view on all signs of God that fill heaven and earth, nor do they look into their own souls or take heed. "*How many a sign there is in the heavens and in the earth that they pass by, turning away from it!*"[759] The reason is that they do not know. That is why the Prophet was commanded: "*...turn thou from him who turns away from Our Remembrance, and desires only the present life. That is their attainment of knowledge. Surely thy Lord knows very well those who have gone astray from His way, and He knows very well those who are guided.*"[760]

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[756] Qur'an 45: 24.
[757] Qur'an 17: 36.
[758] Qur'an 10: 36.
[759] Qur'an 12: 105.
[760] Qur'an 53: 30.

Such a man's knowledge is limited to accumulation of wealth and fulfillment of his passions and appetite in this world. He is forgetful of God and does not take heed. A proud and denying heart is incapable of accepting reason or advice; nor does it believe in signs of God's Power.

The foundation of faith in God and the signs of His Power is humility, submission of the heart, absence of pride, and defense of the truth. A submissive and [spiritually] healthy heart plants faith in the signs of God's Power as well as in all scientific reasoning in man's mind and soul. There are numerous verses in the Qur'an that show how nations and peoples in the past rejected the guidance of the prophets because of their pride and arrogance, and reasons and miracles did not change their attitude, as did the Quraysh tribe opposed the Prophet. In such a situation astuteness and intelligence cannot accomplish much. Here purity of heart is needed. Impure hearts often burn the intellect. Through false evidence and irrational reasoning, they resort to deceitfulness and fool people.

Walīd ibn Mughayrah was one of the cleverest of all Arab shaykhs of his time and was especially known for his intelligence and wealth. When he heard the verses of the Qur'an and after much deliberation could not find a convincing reason to reject them, he called them magic and the blessed Prophet a magician.

The rebellious soul that is present in man prevents him from submitting before the truth. As long as this illness [of the soul] is not treated and cured, unbelievers will continue to deny the truth. Walīd ibn Mughayrah, Abū Jahl, Abū Lahab, and Abū Sufyān[761] were not ordinary people. They were experienced and

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[761] On Abū Jahl see note 69. Walīd ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzumi (d. 624) was one of the enemies of the Prophet from the tribe of Banū Makhzum who was killed in the Battle of Badr in 624. 'Abd al-'Uzzā, known as Abū Lahab (-75–3/549-624), was the Prophet's uncle and one of his powerful enemies. Chapter 111 of the Qur'an was revealed in reference to him. Ṣakhr ibn Harb, known as Abū Sufyān (-63–29/560–650), was the leader of the Quraysh tribe. He opposed the Prophet and fought against him in the battles of Badr and Uḥud, and in the Trench (*Khandaq*). He died in Medina in 29/650.

well-traveled. They had seen the Persian and Byzantine Empires. They were among the most prominent politicians and leaders of opinion of their society. Yet they did not follow the Prophet and refused to recognize his authority in governing over the people and did not follow his leadership. This was in a sense a reflection of their lack of faith in God. They did not believe that a prophet can be a human being and argued that a messenger of God must be an angel or a higher being capable of ruling over us and worthy of being followed. Indeed, such rebellious souls cannot be controlled and guided. Even when they saw so many of his miracles they did not believe him and called his miracles sorcery.

> *When God said, "Jesus Son of Mary, remember My blessing upon thee and upon thy mother, when I confirmed thee with the Holy Spirit, to speak to men in the cradle, and of age; and when I taught thee the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel; and when thou createst out of clay, by My leave, as the likeness of a bird, and thou breathest into it, and it is a bird, by My leave; and thou healest the blind and the leper by My leave, and thou bringest the dead forth by My leave; and when restrained from thee the Children of Israel when thou camest unto them with the clear signs, and the unbelievers among them said, 'This is nothing but sorcery manifest.'"*[762]

In two other verses, the Qur'an discusses other miracles by Christ and explains how people rejected Jesus and only his close [12] disciples believed in him as God's prophet: *"And they devised, and God devised, and God is the best of devisers."*[763]

In short, challenging, defying, and betraying God's messengers is nothing new or limited to a single messenger, every prophet experienced that simply because of pride and arrogance of his fellow men. They called the Qur'an magic! Have you ever thought which verse of the Qur'an is magic—a book that contains subtle subjects and insightful concepts and

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762 Qur'an 5: 110.

763 Qur'an 3: 51–54.

meaning, the law, proper manners and conduct, and profound metaphysical and spiritual issues and discussions? Indeed the more knowledge is expanded the more we realize the miraculous nature of this sacred book. This miracle will survive until the Day of Judgment.

The miraculous nature of the Qur'an is not limited to its eloquence and literary standards. Rather, and more important, the miracle of the Qur'an is among the realities that are presented in an eloquent manner. Its guidance extends to all, black or white, advanced or civilized or primitive, scholar or layman, and will continue to guide human society until the end of time and everywhere on earth. It shows the way and connection to God and His Oneness, Majestic and Glorious is He.

In addition, the very being of the Messenger of God is, in a certain sense, a miracle unto itself. It is a miracle that despite being unlettered and without writing down the revelation, he was able to remember minute details of each verse months and years later and recite them as they were revealed to him in the first place. When the Prophet's Companions recited the verses of the Qur'an in his presence in order to memorize them, he would always correct their errors right then. Could this ability be attributed to the power of his mind and memory alone? This was unprecedented in the whole of human history. The most eloquent and skilled orators have never demonstrated such qualities and have always relied on their notes and writings. Indeed, this is truly a miracle and is indicative of the Messenger's dominion over the realm of meaning.

One of the chapters of the Qur'an that discusses the possibility of *Ma'ād* is the story of the People of the Cave and the Inscription (*aṣḥāb al-kahf wa 'l-raqīm*) in chapter 18.[764] This

[764] The story of the *Aṣḥāb al-Kahf* (People of the Cave) is narrated in chapter 18 of the Qur'an. It corresponds to the story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in Christianity that was well known in the sixth and seventh centuries and very popular both in both East and West. See Louis Massignon, "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and the Christian-Muslim

story is famous in other traditions as well. According to the Qur'an, the People of the Cave were a group of young and believing men who were persecuted by atheists and idol-worshipers in their society. God opened the gates of His knowledge and light to them, and their hearts were filled with His love and the light of faith. They feared no one but God and knew that the only way to be saved was to detach themselves from such an ignorant society. They rebelled and declared:

> *Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth; we will not call upon any god, apart from Him, or then we had spoken outrage. These our people have taken to them other gods, apart from Him. Ah, if only they would bring some clear authority regarding them! But who does greater evil than he who forges against God a lie?*

Then they fled and took refuge in the cave.

> *So, when you have gone apart from them and that they serve, excepting God, take refuge in the Cave, and your Lord will unfold to you of His mercy, and will furnish—you with a gentle issue of your affair.*[765]

When they settled in the cave, they said,

> *"Our lord, give us mercy from Thee, and furnish us with rectitude in our affair." Then We smote their ears many years in the Cave. Afterwards We raised them up again.*[766]

Then they fell asleep in the cave for 300 years. When they woke up they asked one another as to the length of their sleep.

Pilgrimage at Vieux-Marche-Brittany," in Craig G. Bartholomew & Fred Hughes, *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, Ashgate Publishing Company: Burlington, Vt., 2004. See also Jacobus de Voragine & Christopher Stace, eds., *The Golden Legend: Selections*, Penguin Classics, 1998.

[765] Qur'an 18: 14–16.
[766] Qur'an 18: 10–11.

> *And even so We raised them up again that they might question one another. One of them said, "How long have you tarried?" They said, "We have tarried a day, or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord knows very well how long you have tarried."*[767]

The Qur'an narrates this story in connection to the certainty of *Ma'ād.*

> *Or dost thou think the Men of the Cave and Er-Rakeem were among Our signs a wonder? And in this manner We disclosed them [to the people of the city] that they might know that the promise of God is true, and that as for the Hour, there is no doubt concerning it.*[768]

All Qur'anic verses that deal with the story of the People of the Cave ultimately in one way or another connect it to the issue of *Ma'ād.* Even when God speaks in a different context, for example on the adornment on the earth, to try man, and man becomes preoccupied with them and becomes forgetful of God, he turns to the question of *Ma'ād,*

> *We have appointed all that is on the earth for an adornment for it, and that We may try which of them is fairest in works; and We shall surely make all that is on it barren dust. Or dost thou think the Men of the Cave and Er-Rakeem were among Our signs a wonder? When the youths took refuge in the Cave saying, "Our lord, give us mercy from Thee, and furnish us with rectitude in our affair." Then We smote their ears many years in the Cave. Afterwards We raised them up again.*[769]

The incident related to the People of the Cave is not a strange or uncommon story. It occurred at a time of intense debate between monotheists and polytheists on the possibility of revival and Resurrection after death. The question that arises

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[767] Qur'an 18: 19.
[768] Qur'an 18: 19–20.
[769] Qur'an 18: 7–11.

here is the connection between the adornment of the world and the story of the People of the Cave with regard to *Ma'ād*.

In this world people become preoccupied with bounties and lust and pleasure. They forget death and Resurrection and Return. The Qur'an presents this story to warn forgetful man that what happened to the People of the Cave is awaiting all human beings. Giving life to man after death is not an extraordinary act for God: it is a simple act like daily occurrences in man's life. However, if it is hard for man to believe it is because he has never experienced it before, and instead of doing good deeds and purifying his soul, he denies the truth. Those who deny the truth and reject the event (*Ma'ād*) do so because they fear their own action and destiny in the Hereafter. "*The unbelievers say, 'The Hour will never come to us.' Say: 'Yes indeed, by my Lord, it shall come to you, by Him who knows the Unseen.'*"[770]

Man's actions are always present before God. He has knowledge of man's actions but also sees them. He has dominion over the virtuous deeds of the believers and vicious actions of the non-believers. God has promised rewards for the righteous and those who do good deeds and chastisement for deniers and non-believers.

> *...but it is in a Manifest Book; that He may recompense those who believe, and do righteous deeds; theirs shall be forgiveness and generous provision. And those who strive against Our signs to void them—theirs shall be a chastisement of painful wrath.*[771]

The Day of Return will arrive whether man believes in it or denies it. The Qur'an addresses him who denies it in clear words:

> *The unbelievers say, "The Hour will never come to us." Say: "Yes indeed, by my Lord, it shall come to you, by Him who knows the Unseen; not so much as the weight of an ant in*

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770 Qur'an 45: 24.
771 Qur'an 18: 5.

heaven and earth escapes from Him, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but it is in a Manifest Book; that He may recompense those who believe, and do righteous deeds; theirs shall be forgiveness and generous provision. And those who strive against Our signs to void them—theirs shall be a chastisement of painful wrath."[772]

[772] Qur'an 34: 4–5.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Fifth Discourse

The Divine Name "the Giver of Life" and the Certainty of Resurrection

God, the All-Wise, has stated in his Noble Book,

> *They say, "When shall this promise come to pass, if you speak the truth?" Say: "You have the tryst of a day that you shall not put back by a single hour nor put it forward."*[773]

The moment man dies, the phase of the Lesser Resurrection (*Qiyāmat-i ṣughrā*) begins when he enters the intermediate realm (*'ālam-i barzakh*), where he stays until the Greatest Resurrection is established, at which time he dies in the intermediate world and is revivified in the realm of the Greatest Resurrection.

Many people often ask about the timing of the Day of Resurrection and wonder when God will fulfill His Promise [to humankind]. In other words, they ask when God's Judgment will take place. Now, if by "God's Promise" they mean death, and by "God's judgment" the Lesser Resurrection, there should be no doubt that they will occur. Man's awareness or ignorance of these events has nothing to do with the matter itself, and therefore any question regarding it is irrelevant. On the other hand, if they mean the Greatest Resurrection, its timing is entirely unknown. From the point of view of the accident of time it is indefinable and non-determinable. Now, if even hypothetically, the Holy Prophet were to have responded to them with an exact time for the Day of Resurrection, would they have accepted such a response; or would they have discounted his words and denied this as another lie? If they dismissed the most evident miracles as magic and sorcery and rejected them, how would they possibly accept accounts of Resurrection that

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[773] Qur'an 34 : 29–30.

are entirely beyond the limits of human understanding and comprehension? Of course they would deny these truths as well and consider them sorcery. Of course they would simply reject them.

The Greatest Resurrection only comes after the intermediate world has been traversed. This is non-temporal. Whoever leaves this world undertakes a vertical journey towards God Almighty; meaning he will undergo detachment from the material and will enter the intermediate world. Upon the Greatest Resurrection, he dies yet again, entering the world of spirit. This is detached from the world of form; there is no sense of time and duration as we have in this world. Time has a different reality there.

In any case, the Resurrection will certainly occur. The revival of the dead is not a difficult affair; rather it is very easy. In fact, difficulty and ease only make sense when referring to a relative being who has limited powers. If an affair is within the limits of the capability of a relative being, then that affair becomes easy for that being; otherwise it will be difficult for him to undertake. For example, a 50-kilogram weight is easy to lift for an adult, but 150 kilograms may become difficult if it is beyond his ability. Thus, this notion of difficulty and ease are applicable to relative beings that have limitations. But with respect to God, who is Omnipotent, difficulty, time, hardship, and ease are meaningless and become nonsensical, because He is beyond any limitations of time, quantity, ease, or hardship. All the powers that can be imagined are contained in His Power. Any power other than His, whether material or angelic, inward or outward, is different and subject to ease or hardship; for God, the creation of one small particle is the same as the creation of the largest beings. In both cases creation takes place by His Will and Power. All beings, small and large, material and spiritual, of His Dominion or Kingdom are with respect to His Might as equal as the teeth of a comb. This is not just confined to His Attribute of Power: rather it also applies to His Knowledge and Existence.

Giving new life and resurrecting the dead is just as easy and like the beginning of [another phase of] creation for God.

Difficulty and ease, comfort and discomfort, and possibility and impossibility have no meaning there. There is only a singular Will. "*His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is.*"[774] And if there are references in Qur'anic verses where God states it is easier for Him to resurrect and bring the dead back to life, "*and it is very easy for Him,*"[775] it is mentioned primarily for our minds to comprehend, for we understand that creating something from absolute nothing is much more difficult than recreating something from various and dispersed things. And here God is stating that Resurrection is giving a new life to mankind from dispersed parts. From man's own limited perspective it seems much more difficult to create it from nothing (*ex nihilo*) than to recreate something else that was created once before. So when the term "easier" is used in the noble verse, it is used in relation to our understanding and comprehension. The verse wants to make it intelligible and comprehensible to our minds so that man will believe it and not be perplexed at the idea. In reality, however, there is absolutely no difference for God with respect to the two modes of creation and recreation. In this regard, the example of the Companions of the Cave is given so that after having taken heed of their story, we may attain certainty of Resurrection: "*And even so We made them stumble upon them, that they might know that God's promise is true, and that the Hour—there is no doubt of it.*"[776] For 300 years they slept, and yet for them it was as a day or a half-day. Life and death are of the same nature. Is sleep not akin to death? God states, "We did this to make humankind aware of the truth of the Promised day [of Resurrection]."

There is also the parable of Prophet Jeremiah (Irmiyah) that was previously mentioned. He passed by those decrepit bodies, and amazed, he asked himself, "How shall God give life to this now that it is dead?" God took both his and his donkey's soul and resurrected them after one hundred years! Thus God showed Irmiyah the manner in which He will resurrect the dead.

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[774] Qur'an 36: 82.
[775] Qur'an 30: 27.
[776] Qur'an 18: 21.

Or the story of the Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) who asked God to show him the process of Resurrection so that he might understand the power that is necessary for resurrecting souls. He said, *"Show me how Thou wilt give life to the dead."*[777] We already discussed in the 25th discourse the difference between the story of the Prophet Ibrahim and Irmiyah. Here we will only discuss these stories so as to clarify the actual process of Resurrection.

Abraham said, "Oh My Lord, I want to comprehend that actual process and manner through which You resurrect the dead."

God replied, "Oh Abraham, do you not believe the truth of this matter?" Abraham responded, "Yes, I do believe, and I know that You resurrect the dead with Your infinite Might and through Your Divine Name "the Giver of Life" (al-Muḥyī), but I ask only that my heart may be at rest."[778]

What could this mean? This pleading means, "I am at the moment behind a veil; remove for me this veil! I want to bear witness directly and without any veil!" Abraham is a prophet and of the highest rank, a Possessor of Command (*ulu'l 'azm*). He brought a sacred scripture and divine law. He attained very exalted stations, traversed the path of *wilāyah*, and realized the most Beautiful Names. And yet the Divine Name of "the Giver of Life" (al-Muḥyī) had not been manifested and actualized in him. He himself had not resurrected the dead, and did not know how they would be resurrected, in terms of the actual process of Resurrection.

When the Friends of God (*awliyā'*) reach the Station of Proximity [to God], all of the Divine Names and Attributes are manifested in their beings. The prophet Jesus, son of Mary,

[777] Qur'an 2: 260.

[778] *"And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how Thou wilt give life to the dead,' He said, 'Why, dost thou not believe?' 'Yes,' he said, 'but that my heart may be at rest.' Said He, 'Take four birds, and twist them to thee, then set a part of them on every hill, then summon them, and they will come to thee running. And do thou know that God is All-mighty, All-wise.'"*

would say, "I bring to life to the dead, by the leave of God."[779] Not that I will pray to Him and He will revive the dead; rather, *I* will revive the dead with the leave and Power of God. I am a servant, and thus my want and desire is of God, but it is I who act, and the act belongs to me. Simultaneously, however the act belongs to God. Abraham wanted to manifest the Divine Name of "the Giver of Life" in himself, and he is seeking to revive the dead *himself*.

As was mentioned, God commands Abraham to sacrifice four birds in the particular manner that we previously discussed. He was then to divide and place their various parts on 10 separate hilltops. Then God told him to call the birds! What does this mean? This means to call them with your own angelic being and they will answer your call! Here Abraham was himself reviving the dead. For here Abraham was no longer the same man. Here, there was only the Power and Might of God. Here the divine Will and Wont was channeled and appeared through Abraham. He now possessed the most glorious Name of the All-Real. Abraham appeared no more of himself, disappearing into the Name of the Truth. Here only God *is*.

In fact it was because of this call of Abraham that the birds came to life. Abraham brought them to life by the Divine Name, and the Divine Name is the divine Leave and Command. Thus Abraham's heart came to rest, after having witnessed and touched that act and having himself become the actor. All the miracles of the prophets that have been attested to in the Qur'anic verses and *aḥādīth* are within the domain of their own wills. It was not as though they saw themselves as separate from the Might and Will of God, and then prayed to Him: "Oh my Lord, cleave the moon!" "Make this cane into a serpent!" or "Bring this picture of a lion to life! " and then God fulfilled their wishes from beyond their own souls or their manifestations. These miracles are manifested on behalf of the *Walī* himself. The Prophet pointed to the moon and it was cleft in two. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali himself, commanded that

[779] Qur'an 3: 49.

deceased man in the graveyard to rise so that he might say a few words to his son. Thus, when a person with a pure heart and a beautified spirit visits the sick and wishes for the sick to be healed, the healing comes as a direct result of that purified soul's prayer, by the permission of God. A person who has an evil eye causes illness and even death for another person, even if that person is his own child. That is because misery, illness, and death are the effects of a hardened heart and a corrupt soul. By the same token, well-being, long life, and divine Grace can be the consequences of a pure heart and a beautified soul. The effects of evil disappear as foam on water; whereas that which is good and mercy reach humankind and remain on the earth, as the Qur'an says: *"As for the scum, it vanishes as jetsam, and what profits men abides in the earth."*[780]

All these causes and effects that we witness in the world are related and connected to the souls, but only by the leave of God. For no single being, essentially, actually, and effectually finds existentiation without the permission of God. This permission is not contingent permission (*idhn-i i'tibārī*) in the sense that [God would say], "I give permission to you to do this." It is a real engendering permission (*idhn-i takwīnī*) in the soul that can affect that which it is permitted [to affect]. In the process of its engendering and becoming, the soul reaches a station where the Pure Being of God, Most High, manifests Itself through this means, and His Will is actualized through this key and finds existentiation in the outside world.

> Go and become detached so that you can see the Detached.
> This is the precondition to see everything else.[781]

To become detached means to actualize that state of detachment in the soul. Every being, in terms of the abilities contained within its nature and capacity, is the sign of the Power

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[780] Qur'an 13: 17

[781] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, VI.

رو مجرد شو مجرد را ببین   دیدن هر چیز را شرط است این

and Majesty. Knowledge and Life of the Holy One. And humankind has been created with even more capabilities than other beings. When man is enlightened by knowledge, piety, and purity, when he ceases to see his own self and begins to perceive the truth, it can become a mirror and reflect the Divine Names and Attributes, thanks to all the attributes that he acquires. The acts that originate from him become pure because his soul is not diluted by the turbidity of the self. The miracles of the prophets and Imāms, and the miraculous deeds of the Friends of God, are all of this category.

These miracles, while attributed to and performed by those prophets, are ultimately performed by God, Most High. Therefore, actions have a dual attribution: from one perspective, they emanate from the Supreme Source of Goodness and the Origin of Being and thus originate from His sacred Precinct. However, from another perspective, they proceed from the channel of prophets, become delimited, and find expression by human agency and thus are attributed to the prophets and Friends of God. As the late philosopher, [Mullā Hādī] Sabzawārī wrote in his poem:

> And just as existence is attributed [to us],
> Then action is [indeed] action of God and simultaneously ours.[782]

Therefore, it is man alone who has the capability to actualize the most Glorious Name of the Absolute Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) and who, more than any other being, can manifest the various presences of the Supreme Truth. This is most true of the great prophets and noble Imāms, and most especially in the blessed being of the Prophet of God, Muhammad ibn ʻAbdullah, may the blessings and peace of God be upon him and his progeny. He is the highest personification, the most perfect mirror to reflect [God's miracles], and the most complete embodiment of the Divine's Universal Names and Attributes. He has indeed

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[782] Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, pp. 174–175, as quoted in *Ghurar al-fawāʼid*.
لكنْ كما الوجود منسوب   فالفعل فعل الله و هو فعلنا

realized and actualized all of those Names and Attributes within himself.

Indeed, man attains perfection only when these spiritual qualities become manifested in him. It is only then that all of his potentialities and abilities are actualized, and his whole being becomes like a mirror that reflects God alone. It is true that if any being that finds existentiation in the universe, it is because of the presence of the Divine Self in it, and without His permission not even the tiniest change, transformation, or movement could take place. In other words, without the manifestation of God's infinite Mercy, no being possesses existence or qualities. Yet experiencing and witnessing this reality requires that man attain perfection. As [Abd al-Raḥmān] Jāmī so eloquently wrote,

> As long as there remains a sign of existence [in you]
> How would you expect the cup of witnessing
> to be cleansed of the stains?[783]

God's permission refers to a definitive and certain command and the rule that He has ordained in the created world. This system entails and allows for beings to affect the world. This is the reality of God's theophany; it is the permission and leave of God. Just like a radio: if one wire of a radio is cut, the whole set ceases to function. Thus one condition for its proper functioning is the wellness of the entire set. Hearing a sound from a radio is contingent on the proper functioning of thousands of other pieces that are interrelated. Similarly, the existing laws of the universe, that is to say, the means and conditions for the proper functioning of the universe, must also be present and be ordered in a particular way for sound to be emitted from the radio. Thus the emitting of this sound is also by the permission of God.

On that particular night, in that cold chilly air of the wilderness, as the pangs of childbirth gripped his wife, the prophet Moses had to leave her alone with no aid or support, or

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[783] Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūs fi sharh fuṣūs*, p. 137, edited with an introduction by William Chittick, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1381/2002.

تا بود باقی بقایای وجود کی شود صاف از کدر جام شهود

food or medicine, or water or fire, while he searched desperately around for some firewood. Only when all other hopes had vanished and the feeling of desperation and anxiety had gripped his sacred soul, the light of God shone on the tree and proclaimed, *"Oh Moses! Indeed I am God."* O Moses! Indeed I am God, the One and only Reality.[784]

Some may say that God created a light in that tree and produced a sound that proclaimed, *"Indeed I am God."* What does this mean? By simply producing a sound that says, *"Indeed I am God,"* the tree could not become God. What does the pronoun "I" refer back to? If God Himself was not there, what would it mean? It would have simply been a sound, produced from the tree, only figuratively stating, "I am God." Is not this tree a theophany of God? Is it not commanded and controlled by God? Is it not given permission by God? Its entire existence, its physical being and its inner secrets, its roots and leaves, all the tiny particles of its existence and all the droplets of water that run through it, all these are in the Grasp and Power of God, are encompassed by His Knowledge, and suggest His Presence and Manifestation. In a sense it is true that God is closer to this tree than the tree itself. Each individual particle of this tree is first of God and only thereafter of itself; rather we must say its first and last being are of God. Thus, this very tree is a sign of God, and it is showing that *"Indeed, I am God."* How beautifully Sabzawārī explained this reality in his poem when he wrote,

> There is no heart (head) where thy love's fervor does not reside
> There is no eye in which your beauteous vestige is not seen
> If only our eyes were not blind as a bat's,
> On every wall and gate we would see the reflection of Thy beauty
> There are no longer men like Moses to hear the call, *"I am God,"*

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[784] Qur'an 20: 9–14 and 27: 7–9.

Though in every tree this silent whisper reverberates.[785]

Sabzawārī implies that [in this day and age] no man like Moses exists to hear the call *"I am God,"* although every tree utters that statement. Rather it emerges from all beings. That tree is not unique in this sense. It is as all other trees, for all trees in the world are the loci of divine manifestation. They are the loci of the Presence and Light of Truth, portraying Divine Names and Attributes. However, a man like Moses must be there to hear and bear witness to this, and only when a man becomes like Moses can he hear the voice, whether it is from that particular tree [on Mount Sinai] or another.

By virtue of his purity and perfection the prophet Moses was able to actualize the manifestation of the Light of God's Unity (*tawḥīd*) and witness it. That is why the Qur'an says, *"He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He has knowledge of everything."*[786]

All beings essentially witness Divine Unity. Imām 'Ali explained this reality in a very profound manner in the following prayer that is recited during the first 10 days of the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah:

By the Time and by the number of nights,
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of waves in the oceans,
"There is no god but God,"
His Mercy is better than all things people can earn,
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of thorns and trees,
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of hair and wool,
"There is no god but God,"
By all the stones and clay,
"There is no god but God,"
By all the blinks of all eyes,

[785] Ḥajj Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, as quoted in Dehkhodā, *Lughat nāmah* (entry "Sabzavārī"), p. 237.
[786] Qur'an 57: 3.

"There is no god but God,"
And by the *"close of the night,"*
"And the breath of the morning,"[787]
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of winds in deserts and rocks,
"There is no god but God,"
From today until *"The day that the trumpet is blown,"*[788]
"There is no god but God."

Every flower that blossoms and every particle in this world utters *"There is no god but God"* and is a sign of His Essence, Names and Attributes. All things in the Kingdom or in the Dominion do so in accordance with their capabilities. Alas, man in this world is heedless; it is only when he departs this world that he realizes there was only One Reality and it was *"there is no god but God."*

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[787] Qur'an 81: 17–18.
[788] Qur'an 78: 18. This supplication is recorded in Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Thawab al-a'mālmāl*, lithograph edition, pp. 41–42. See also, Shaykh Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāḥbāḥ al-mutihajjid*, lithograph edition, p. 467.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Sixth Discourse

The Rain of Life Revives the Dead

God, the All-Wise, says in His Noble Book:

> *We have decreed among you Death: We shall not be outstripped; that We may exchange the likes of you, and make you to grow again in a fashion you know not.*[789]

It is narrated from Imām Ṣādiq that, "When God wills to resurrect His creation, He will command the skies to rain upon the earth for 40 days, and [as a result] all organs of the body will gather and the flesh will grow [once again].[790]

Several other verses also reiterate that when God wills to resurrect the dead, He will send rain, and through that rain new life will be instilled in them:

> *And thou beholdest the earth blackened, then, when We send down water upon it, it quivers, and swells, and puts forth herbs of every joyous kind. That is because God—He is the Truth, and brings the dead to life, and is powerful over everything, and because the Hour is coming, no doubt of it, and God shall raise up whosoever is within the tombs.*[791]

Of course, this noble verse and *ḥadīth* do not denote that the rain that resurrects the dead will be the rain we witness in this world. Rather, this is a metaphor. Just as this rain bestows new life and spirit into the veins of the earth that is barren and dead, similarly there is a rain that brings the dead back to life. God has ordained that particular effect for that (resurrecting) rain, such that when it descends unto the dried bones and broken pieces of the body, it revivifies them and breathes new life into the world.

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[789] Qur'an 56: 60–1.
[790] Ṣadūq, *Amālī*, 107.
[791] Qur'an 22: 5.

The rain that descends unto the earth emanates from a particular Divine Name, "*He who revives the Earth after its death.*" Thus it bestows new life on the dead earth. And that other rain is in reality an emanation of God's Mercy through His Name "*He Who enlivens the dead after their death and who raises the dead after being in their graves.*"[792] This Name will result in the final Resurrection of all beings, when they are revived and attend the Day of Gathering [for reckoning].

In reality, this act of God is no different from His creation of all existent beings and the appearance of all contingent beings (*mumkināt*). There is no difference between the two; thus His resurrecting the dead should not seem strange or wondrous.

> *If thou wouldst wonder, surely wonderful is their saying, "What, when we are dust shall we indeed then be raised up again in new creation?" Those are they that disbelieve in their Lord; those—on their necks are fetters; those shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.*[793]

A *ḥadīth* is narrated from Imām Bāqir where he states,

> Astonishing, indeed entirely astonishing, is he who doubts God's power, while he sees God's creation. Astonishing, indeed entirely astonishing, is he who denies another life, while he sees this first life. Astonishing, indeed entirely astonishing, is he who confirms the eternal abode, while he (only) strives for the abode of delusion. Astonishing, indeed entirely astonishing, is he who is proud and boastful, who (while) being created from an embryo and becoming carrion, is all the while [between his origins and his end] ignorant of how he was made.

The same source narrates a slightly different version of the same *ḥadīth* on the authority of Imām Sajjād: "Astonishing, indeed entirely astonishing, is he who denies (his own) death, while he sees others die every day and night."[794] This death will arrive

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[792] Qur'an 30: 50.
[793] Qur'an 13: 5.
[794] Marfu' Barqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, I: 242.

upon you, for in reality it leads to your perfection. [They forget that God said], "*We have decreed among you Death; We shall not be outstripped; that We may exchange the likes of you, and make you to grow again in a fashion you know not. You have known the first growth; so why will you not remember?*[795]

In other words, God says that if you were to stay in this world eternally, the world would actually corrupt and destroy you. Therefore, God changes your worldly "attire." He moves you along these planes and will "*make you to grow again in a fashion you know not...*" until you reach a station where you do not know what you will become as We fashion you according to that (unknown) creative form. Man will return unto God, and his Return will be with his entire being, with his body and spirit, and yet he who is unaware (of this reality) is ignorant of this. Just as man's spirit returns to God, his body is also resurrected. The skepticism of materialists and their rejection of this [transformation] is irrelevant and is purely based on delusion. "*And he has struck for Us a similitude and forgotten his creation; he says, "Who shall quicken the bones when they are decayed?" Say: "He shall quicken them, who originated them the first time; He knows all creation.*"[796]

A man came by a cemetery. He picked up a decayed bone and brought it to the Messenger of God. He squeezed the bone, and because it had decayed, it crumbled in his hand and turned to dust. He then threw the dust in front of the Prophet and said, "Oh Muhammad, you claim that God brings this back to life?"

This poor man who denied God through his skepticism and scorn, "*He forgot his own creation...*"[797] What was he and whence did he come? If only he had reflected on his own creation, he would have been so astounded that he would not have allowed himself to act in such a way, because that same Creator will give life to him once again. "*He shall quicken them who originated them the first time.*"[798] Why? Because "*He*

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[795] Qur'an 56: 60.
[796] Qur'an 36: 78–79.
[797] Qur'an 36: 78.
[798] Qur'an 36: 79.

knows all creation." God's Knowledge is not limited to any particularity. It is not due to some cause such that if that cause were absent, He would be devoid of His Knowledge or Power. "*He who has made for you out of the green tree fire and lo, from it you kindle.*"[799] But what does a tree, which thrives on water, have to do with fire? How could it be used as fuel for fire? This is His unbounded and unlimited Knowledge and Power. "*Is not He, who created the heavens and earth, able to create the like of them? Yes indeed; He is the All-creator, the All-knowing.*"[800]

Indeed, He who created the heavens and earth with such profound order and precision, circulating and rotating them, and causing them to change and transform, is so unparalleled and beyond all creation, possessing Infinite Power and Knowledge, that "*His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is.*"[801]

Simply by His willing the creation of a being, that being is existentiated. He does not need time or space, and does not depend on another's power or capability, or upon matter or gradation. He does not require any aid or condition, or anything else. If something is created gradually, it is that God has willed it to be created gradually, not that it is outside His Will. This is witnessed in the gradual development of an embryo into a person, a process that takes nine months through the various stages that God has established for its transformation and reaching of perfection.

And just as God, through the word "Be," created the camel of the prophet Ṣālih and brought him forth from the belly of the mountain, He can create man through that same word. Did He not create the prophet Jesus through the word "Be"? Did he not also create the prophet Adam and Eve solely through His Word ("Be!")?

In summary, the command of God is decidedly not of time and space. We see Him as such because we are confined and live in time and space. Yet in reality, in the divine realm, time

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[799] Qur'an 36: 80.
[800] Qur'an 36: 81.
[801] Qur'an 36: 82.

has no meaning. The command of God is His Will. And His Will is that same divine Command "Be." And that "Be" means "the coming to be"; in other words, it is external realization in the engendered world (*'ālam-i-takwīn*). It is that essential and external manifestation of divine Will, and is not separate from that Will. *"So glory be to Him, in whose hand is the dominion of everything, and unto whom you shall be returned."*

In chapter 46 [of the Qur'an] (The Sand-Dunes), God says,

> *But he who says to his father and his mother, "Fie upon you! Do you promise me that I shall be brought forth, when already generations have passed away before me?" while they call upon God for succor—"Woe upon thee! Believe; surely God's promise is true."*

Then he says,

> *"This is naught but the fairy-tales of the ancients"—such men are they against whom has been realized the Word concerning nations that passed away before them, men and jinn alike; they were losers.*[802]

Some people who do not know anything other than animalistic life (as the final stage of human existence) reject the idea of the Return (*Ma'ād*) and deny Resurrection. They say that *"There is nothing but our present life; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time destroys us."*[803] They do not believe in any reality and existence beyond this world that may be hidden to them now, and say that *"They are merely conjecture."*[804]

Others accept spiritual Resurrection but deny a physical one. They say that because man possesses both an intellect and a soul, and since both the intellect and the soul are non-corporeal, both of these return towards their origins, while the body, discarded in the grave, takes on various appearances and transformations. Thus, only the soul and not the body shall be resurrected. Still others say that definitely not the soul, but only

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[802] Qur'an 46: 17–18.
[803] Qur'an 46: 24.
[804] Qur'an 2: 78.

the body, with all its senses such as pleasure and appetite, shall be resurrected. Yet this group turns a blind eye towards those non-hedonistic perfections, such as the intellectual perfections and [the possibility of] annihilating one's self in the Divine Names and Attributes. They disregard all the intellectual provisions and dispensations, and adhere to the physical ones.

Some other thinkers believe that both modes of Resurrection exist. Both the spirit and the body will be resurrected. The philosopher Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī said,

> He who says the Return is only of spirit
> Is like him who says the Return is just physical.
> He who believes in these two returns is saved
> and has triumphed over all others.[805]

Those philosophers who posit a purely spiritual Resurrection argue that the reality of man is his intellect and soul. The intellect and soul are both incorporeal. The spirit is a being that like a bird is perched on the celestial Lote Tree. It exists at the highest planes of creation. And although it once enjoyed its lofty status, it has been relegated to this body, forced to take on its form. This dusky bird, confined in this material cage, survives therein for some time. But it eventually breaks free and escapes its prison. It flies up and away, returning to its lofty perch, leaving its empty cage behind. Thus, the body is simply a means by which the soul can attain the various levels of perfection it was created for. And once the soul is perfected and returns to its celestial and incorporeal origins, it will cast

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[805] Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, p. 335.

مَنْ قصر المعاد فى
الرّوحانى

قصر كالحاصر فى الجسمانى
و جامع بينهما جا
فائزا

و قصبات السبق كان حائزا

away the body and leave it in its origins—the dust. Therefore, according to this view, the *Ma'ād* is the spirit's Return to God.

According to the proponents of the spiritual Resurrection, imaginal man (*khiyāli*) and his archetypal (*mithālī*) faculties exist because of and by means of the body. They perceive the archetypal and imaginal faculties as being those same emotional and sentimental faculties, and consider the mind as that faculty which comprehends the agreeable and disagreeable images attained from the world. Thus, when the body ceases to exist, the images and imaginal forms become naught along with it. In short, according to this view, heaven and hell are created by means of the mind and its conceptualization of those realms. And because the mind depends upon the body, the death of the body means the death of the mind (and hence the disappearing of heaven and hell). In response to this group, namely the proponents of the spiritual Resurrection, we say:

Firstly, in addition to faculties by which the soul perceives, such as the imaginal faculty, it also possesses [other faculties of] perception. In other words, the soul has other faculties of its own, such as seeing, hearing, and other attributes that are intrinsic to it. Therefore, once the soul ascends to its own realm, it utilizes these innate faculties, and attains a certain type of pleasure and happiness that is other than these intellectual pleasures, all of which are peculiar to the world of annihilation.

Secondly, the archetypal faculties and the imaginal realm are essentially non-corporeal and detached. A person can detach himself from his material body through perfecting his archetypal faculty. Having left his body, he can enter the imaginal and ideal realms through his spirit, independent of the body. And not only are the imaginative and reflective faculties detached and non-corporeal, but so are the *sensus communis*, the retentive faculty, and all the other inner faculties. Each of these claims enjoys sufficient philosophical proofs, which are also used to prove the existence of the imaginal realm that was previously discussed. This is that same intermediary realm that exists between this world and the Greater Resurrection. It is neither purely spiritual nor corporeal. That realm is not devoid

of all forms and figures, nor of all ideal and material pleasures and pains. This is a separate realm that stands independently and on its own, but also has the effects of the material realm. Therefore, like the archetypal faculty the soul is simple (*basīṭ*) and detached. When the body is alive, the soul exists along with it. But after the body perishes, the soul does not cease to exist and die. Rather it continues to exist in its own separate realm within its own engendered reality. And it carries along with it all the things it acquired within this world, whether they were agreeable or disagreeable. Indeed, after death, each person sees all those same forms he witnessed in this world, throughout his stay in the imaginal realm.

Ibn Sīnā did not believe in the existence of the intermediary realm, and only truly accepted the two realms of matter and spirit. One could potentially deduce from some of the passages in the *Shifā'* that he believed the imaginal realm to be detached as well, which if true, would have meant that he should have inevitably accepted a third intermediary realm. However, even if we were to accept these passages, he explicitly denied the existence of an intermediary realm, and hence claimed that the archetypal realm is dependent upon the body, and once the body perishes, all it has acquired in this world, whether good or evil, will perish along with it. And the spirit will survive independently in its own separate abode, either enjoying intellectual pleasures because of all the perfections it has acquired in this world, or else suffering punishment because of the lack of those perfections. Therefore, according to Ibn Sīnā, the physical Resurrection really has no meaning. Thus he explicitly stated in the *Shifā'* that there is no rational proof for the physical Resurrection. But because, he added, the truthful Prophet of Islam informed us of its existence through the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah*, therefore, [we must believe that] it exists beyond any doubt. Ibn Sīnā stated in the *Shifā'*:

> It is necessary to know that there are two types of Resurrection. One is that which is narrated in religion. There is no way to prove it except through the *Sharī'ah* and to accept what the Prophet has informed us about. That pertains

> to the body at the time of Resurrection. The good and bad about the body are clear and there is no need for them to be learned. Indeed, in the true religion that our Prophet and Master Muhammad (May God's greetings be with him) brought for us, the wretchedness or felicity of the body is described in detail.
>
> The other kind of Resurrection is that which can be proved by intellect and analogical reasoning, and the Prophet also described and acknowledged that. That pertains to the wretchedness or felicity of the soul proved by means of analogy, and the human soul itself experiences that. And our imagination is incapable of understanding it for reasons that we shall describe.[806]

Thus it becomes clear Ibn Sīnā did not deny the physical Resurrection; rather he accepted it because of his faith in religion, in just the same way as he accepted the spiritual Resurrection because of both the *Sharī'ah* and various rational proofs. In his discussion of the physical Resurrection, after some introductory remarks, he states,

> Once it reaches this stage, these spiritual perfections would be entirely incomparable to all other relevant perfections that exist for the other faculties, such that it would be simply inappropriate for us to say this is superior or more perfect. Rather, the way in which the soul is gratified and attains felicity has no relevance to its superiority, perfection, multiplicity, or all the other means and different ways that the other faculties attain their gratification.[807]

It was just mentioned that denying the physical Resurrection is premised upon rejecting the detachment of the imaginal faculty and the existence of the intermediate world. In other

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[806] Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, Chapter on *Ma'ād*, *Book of Theology*.
يَجِبُ أنْ يُعْلَمَ أنَّ الْمَعادَ مِنهُ ما هُوَ مَنْقولٌ فى الشَّرْعِ، وَ لا سَبيلَ إلَى إثْباتِهِ إلاَّ مِن طَريقِ الشَّريعَةِ وَ تَصْديقِ خَبَرِ النَّبى، وَ هُوَ الَّذى لِلْبَدَنِ عندَ الْبَعْثِ، وَ خَيْراتُ الْبَدَنِ وَ شُرورُهُ مَعْلومَةٌ لا يَحْتاجُ إلَى تَعَلُّم . وَ قَد بَسَطَتِ الشَّريعَةُ الْحَقَّةُ التى أتانا بِها نَبينا وَ سَيدُنا وَ مَوْلانا مُحمدٌ صَلَّى الله عَلَيْهِ وَء الِهِ حالَ السعادَةِ وَ الشَّقاوَةِ الَّتى بِحَسَبِ الْبَدَنِ

[807] Ibid.

words, such a conclusion is generally premised by and based on rejecting the detached archetypal realm. But if we were to agree that the archetypal realm does exist, the problem is resolved; for those pleasures that the soul enjoys in the archetypal world are the same as those of the world of form and can be separated from the body. Thereafter man always possessed those forms. Regarding this spiritual Resurrection, Sabzawārī said:

> Among the intellects transformed from potentiality to actuality, some ascend the realm of intellect after death, and some types of potential intellect become actual and thus become like to the objective world. The existing form fully beautifies this intellect as it was while it descended in the first place. This engendered intellect has the same quiddity in every way, but it differs only in terms of its strength or weakness. Man becomes the microcosm (*'ālam al-ṣaghīr*) that contains in itself all that is other than God (*mā siwa'lLah*). For him the entire creation (*'ālam al-akbar*) becomes a mirror that reflects His Presence.[808]

[808] Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, pp. 329–331.

إنّ الذى بالعقل بالفعل انتقى

فهو لعالم العقول مرتقى
منه يصير عالما عقليا

به يضاهى عالما عينيا
و هيئة الوجود بالشراشر

تزينه كالأول فى الآخر
كونا أشديه
أضعفيه

خالف و المهية المهية
فالعالم الأكبر كان حاويا

كأن غدا كلّ له مرآتيا

In a well-known poem, the Commander of the Faithful also refers to this reality, as he writes,

> Do you think that you are just this insignificant body,
> While contained within you is the greatest universe?

Sabziwārī also describes the Gathering Place wherein the physical bodies are resurrected, and it is worthy of being repeated here. In short, he states the physical Resurrection comes about through physical bodies that are associated with the nine celestial bodies. [According to him], these physical bodies are subtle and lucid, and are not composed of the density of natural bodies. Ibn Sīnā also mentioned this and accepted its general premises. Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭusī believes that "This view originates with Fārābī." And Shaykh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī accepts Fārābī's view while Mullā Ṣadrā rejects it and presents a number of objections to this view in two separate sections of his *Four Mystical Journeys* (*Asfār arba'ah*). Basically, he states that this view necessarily implies a reincarnation (*tanāsukh*) of the human soul into celestial matter (which is rejected in Islam). He criticizes this view for two reasons. One is that it requires the celestial spheres to be affected by very distant causes, namely the human soul. The other is that such a view would also mean the smoky (*dukhānīyah*) bodies would not be protected or preserved from change and corruption. Among his objections he states that the celestial spheres and the various souls do not correspond eternally, because the former are bound by time and do come to an end, whereas the latter are not bound by time and do not come to an end like the celestial spheres.

Sabzawārī attempted to defend Fārābī's and Suhrawardī's position on this point, and believed himself to have sufficiently responded to Mullā Ṣadrā. However, in all honesty, some of Mullā Ṣadrā's objections point to serious problems with the view, especially since in our day *the entire notion of celestial spheres has been rejected.*

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Seventh Discourse

The Identity of Things Is Their Forms, Not Their Material Substance

God, the All-Wise has stated in his Noble Book,

> *I swear by the reproachful soul. What, does man reckon We shall not gather his bones? Yes indeed: We are able to shape again his fingers.*[809]

The word *banān* (translated above as "fingers") mentioned in the verse is the paper-thin skin that forms around the fingernails and connects the nails to the fingers.

God says in this verse that humankind thinks that He cannot gather his bones. He created all of the various parts of his body, including the seemingly smallest perceptible part, this paper-thin skin named *banān*. The materialists' doubt about the Resurrection is based on their belief in God's inability to bring the dead back to life. And yet God is not limited by any means and does not even neglect this most seemingly insignificant part of the body, namely the *banān*. He resurrects humankind in their entirety and brings them to the Gathering Place (*maḥshar*) for Judgment.

Some make an argument against the doctrine of physical Resurrection called "the eater and the eaten" (*ākil wa ma'kūl*) argument. This critique states that the substance and forms of things in the world of nature are constantly changing. Moreover, all things are consumed by something else. The seed consumes the nutrients from the soil as it turns into a tree: the fire consumes the tree and turns it into fuel and coal, changing it into ash. In short, matter is in constant flux and transformation as time passes, taking on the form of a man, then of a cow, a

[809] Qur'an 75: 3–4.

donkey, a tree, water, and so on, taking on all the various manifestations and faces of matter.

When a person's physical body disintegrates, gradually plants and insects begin to dissect it and use it for nutrients and food, incorporating parts of that person's physical body into their own. And as the cycle continues, those beings that have eaten the person's body will then in turn be eaten by another being and so on. If this is true, then were all of mankind to be resurrected, many individuals would share a single body. And if they were, say, to have independent bodies, one body would have to take precedence in being independent from the others. It would be impossible to determine whose body would take precedence, because it would violate the principle of "precedence without reason" (*tarjīḥ bi lā murajjaḥ*). I will explain this further.

The various bits and pieces of different material bodies are mixed with the passage of time and the natural ecological cycles. This causes the bits and molecules of one person's physical body to be spread and finally be consumed by the body of another person.

If God wills that the person who "consumes" other bodies is to be resurrected in his entirety with his complete physical body intact, then it would render the body of the being that it consumed incomplete. These cycles of *eating* and *being eaten* are connected together horizontally and vertically; that is to say, each person consumes millions of other things and at the same time is consumed by millions of other things; therefore, the Resurrection of that which consumes and that which is consumed is impossible. This is one objection against the view of materialists about physical Resurrection. An additional and related argument is the following.

Now that we have accepted that it is impossible for that which eats and that which is eaten to be resurrected together, one of the two has to have priority and preference over the other to be resurrected fully while the other remains incomplete. Yet this would go against that aforementioned principle of giving preference without reason to that which is not preferable.

Another problem arises when we consider that in this chain and flow of matter, the bodies of believers and disbelievers are intermingled. And if God were to punish the disbeliever, he would necessarily be punishing parts of the believer's body as well. And if He rewards the believer's body, He would have to reward the disbeliever's as well, even though the body of the disbeliever disobeyed God while the believer's body did not. In this case, one cannot both punish and reward the same body. Thus, in a very general sense, and with the aforementioned premises in mind, God must either cease being merciful towards the believers and continue punishing the disbelievers, or He must cease punishing the disbelievers and reward the believers. And yet both of these contradict our assumptions: first, because the purpose of Judgment Day is primarily to reap the fruits of our actions; and second, because an obedient believer of God must be rewarded with compassion and goodness, whereas a disbeliever who commits evil must face divine punishment and vengeance. Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī refuted this argument and said:

> Its refutation is clear, based on what has passed. Every individual is identified with his soul and not his body. For the body, which is a means of identity of the individual, is unidentifiable; it has no identifiable existence or entification except through the soul of the person. From this perspective, it does not possess any identification or stable or eternal essence. For example, Zayd's body does not require a similar body so that it can be resurrected. In other words, his physical body that was eaten by a wild animal or another human being will not be resurrected. Rather everything that pertains to the soul will be resurrected in the same body it belonged to before [death].
>
> Therefore, the belief in bodily Resurrection on the Day of Reckoning denotes that when someone sees each of the bodies raised from the graves, he will recognize them and be able to identify them.
>
> Recognizing an individual with his body does not necessitate that his being or quiddity remain unchanged from how it was in this world. Nor does it require that he be resurrected ugly

> and dismembered, or blind and old like the way he looked in this world, as it has been related in the narrations and traditions.[810]

Mullā Hāḍī Sabzawārī has given a similar response, the crux of which is that when a being changes and is transformed from one form to another, the primary essence of that thing does not change. Otherwise it would necessitate a change in essence, or rather one material substance to contain two separate forms [hence contradicting the law of identity]. When water changes its state from liquid to gas, it does not mean that when it transforms from water to air, it transforms from an essentially watery substance to an essentially airy substance, for this would be a change in quiddity. Rather it means that its material substance discards its liquid form and acquires a gassy form. A material substance can only have two separate forms at two separate times, and each form is preserved in its own time because a particular form is not a necessary condition for the existence of a matter. Rather it is limitations placed on matter. Absolute form with relation to matter is an accidental property and not a substantial one.[811] As it has been demonstrated in Transcendent Philosophy [the relationship between] the identity of things is in their forms, not their matter. In other words, all natural beings share matter, and a simple unidentified and un-entified matter constitutes their forms, which is often called the prime matter/*hyle* (*hayūla*) or matter of matters (*mādat al-mawād*).

For this material substance to be gathered and be individuated, it requires something [outside of it] to entify it and give it a name. This could be a man, an animal, a tree, and so on. Therefore, the human-ness of man depends upon the human form and not a material substance, because after all, matter exists in not just humans but also in other things that are separate from us. And those other material substances are surely not

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810 Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī, *Asfār al-arba'ah* (*The Four Journeys of the Soul*), vol. 9, p. 300.

811 Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, p. 345.

called "human." Once matter is particularized as a person, it is called human, just as in the case of animals, trees, and so on. Once that material substance is transformed, as it changes from one form to another, the substance is transitioned between two separate physical forms and is not extirpated. For example, a piece of wood is transformed from its wood-form and takes the form of coal. Therefore, the individuation of existent beings depends upon their differentia and their essential forms, not their material substance. That which makes Zayd himself is his Zayd-ness [his individuality], not his material body. That which defines a believer is belief, and that which defines a disbeliever is his disbelief, not his material body. Although material substance subsists beyond all of that being's states and forms, without that material substance, none of these forms would have been realized in the external world. But that material substance is shared among all of these states, and, for example, the wood-ness of wood does not depend on its material substance, or its matter, but rather on its differentia, which is that of "wood." And these forms appear one after another on that material substance, although that matter subsists throughout. One egg that transforms into a chick has attained two forms from a singular material substance at two separate instances. The current state of a thing is defined by its current form. Thus it becomes impossible for two forms to unite in one being, e.g., for an egg to be both an egg and a chick at the same time. One form must cease to exist for another form to appear on that material substance. And in general, the existence and particularization of every existent in the real world is subject to its form, not the shared material substance [that does not differentiate it from other beings].

Now in the case of "the eater and the eaten" (*ākil wa ma'kūl*) argument, no *eater* eats the form of that which it eats, and the form of that which is *eaten* does not change into the form of the *eater*. Rather the eater consumes the material substance of the eater's form, and that material substance takes the form of the eater; all the forms themselves are thus intact. A disbeliever who, directly or indirectly, eats the body of the believer does not

eat the believer's form: that form is preserved, as is the form of the disbeliever. Rather he has simply eaten the material substance of the believer, which now takes on his, the disbeliever's, form.

According to a proven truth of Islamic philosophy, the rational soul is detached and continues to exist after death. It persists in its actuality and never changes, being eternally preserved. That which becomes food for the *eater* is the material substance of Zayd, which thereafter acquires the form of the disbelieving Pharaoh and whatever follows from that acquisition. What gives individuation to Zayd and the Pharaoh and differentiates them from each other in the external world are their forms of human-ness and their [distinct] rational souls, along with their belief and disbelief. And these [distinctions] never separate from each other, nor do they ever mix or become diluted. Thus, Zayd never becomes Pharaoh, nor does Pharaoh ever become Zayd. The shared material substance is ambiguous and is never actualized [as itself and separated from the particularization] in the external world. It is impossible for it to exist and be found independently [without a particular form] in the external world. One cannot find matter without a particular form in external reality. That which actualizes an existent being is the form that is placed on matter. Thus, the Day of Return has nothing to do with matter, because matter has nothing to do with Zayd, nor does it relate to good and evil acts, or belief and disbelief. Prime matter (*mādat al-mawād*) permeates and pervades all material beings and thus has no individuation. It has no actual referent for it to be rewarded or punished, or to categorize existents by. Rather, existent beings are categorized according to their forms: things are distinguished by means of their forms. These forms subsist in the realm of aeon (*'ālam-i dahr*) and in the confines of the engendered world.

The given forms of all things change every moment, just as in the process whereby the egg transforms into a chick. Every moment presents a new form to this material substance that differs from its previous forms until that chick is created and then grows, and later transforms into food for another being: its

forms continue to change. Man is the same: every person at this current moment has an actualized form, and his prior and subsequent forms are hidden to him. We presently do not sense other than our current forms. But in reality, all of these forms exist, albeit hidden from us. Yesterday's form did not disappear, nor was it lost or did it cease to exist. Rather it is only confined to yesterday, now that matter has taken on a different form. Thus all the stages and changing forms of man and other existent beings, from the beginning of creation until its end, really do exist. They exist in the world of being and reality. Yet we are not aware of them. Why? This is because man is a being that lives within the limits of time and space. Fundamentally, the condition for the individuation of our natures is location in time and space, which are a part of those nine predicables. Since our current individuation depends upon time and space, we only comprehend the present time and space. The previous and succeeding moments and locations are hidden from us. Our present form is bounded to this time and [this] space. The previous and subsequent forms exist in the aeon (*'ālam-i-dahr*) according to their own particular times and spaces, and are not subject to annihilation and destruction. If someone were to escape the limitations of time and space, in accordance with his own capacity and capability he would be able to witness the various forms of a thing with all of its accidents and particularities in any specific time and space.

To conclude, clearly our comprehension is too limited and the manner of our intellection not vast enough to allow us to witness our previous and succeeding forms. Otherwise in the engendered world of existence all things subsist and are present concurrently. [Our current condition] is as though we are looking at a long rope through a tiny hole: each part of the string has a different color, and through this tiny hole we can only see a limited part of it; the rest seems non-existent to us. However, the more this tiny hole expands, the longer part of that rope can be seen until we witness the entire string, from beginning to end. Now imagine a number of different observers are looking at this same rope. Being positioned at different parts of the string, and

depending on the strength of their vision, each sees only a particular length of the rope and its color, and believes the rest of the string is non-existent—until a person comes who sees the entire string at once and can perceive each of the various colors separately. This is the person who has dominion over the string.

> Born in the spring, and dead in the winter-month,
> How could a fly know whence this garden comes?[812]

According to well-established philosophical proofs, existence and non-existence are contradictory. No being, while existing, can concurrently not exist. Existence and non-existence can follow one another, but in a single moment, a being must either exist or not exist. Therefore, if one thing exists in the temporal unit of today, it exists eternally and *cannot not* exist in the temporal unit of today. Otherwise, it would be a contradiction. Within this hypothetical temporal unit life must either exist or not exist. Assuming that a human or a thing in one single temporal unit has existence, then attributing non-existence to it in that same temporal unit would not make sense. Of course, you could attribute death to it in the subsequent temporal unit, but then this second attribution would not refer to today's temporal unit. Therefore, based on this proof, it is impossible to attribute non-existence to any being that has entered existence. For anything that begins to exist, it is impossible for it to not exist. Existence and non-existence cannot join together [in one thing], because every single existent in the universe that God created is bound by time and space and exists eternally in its own temporal unit. The existent things of a million year ago still exist in the temporal units of a million year ago, and are of course non-existent in our temporal units. Therefore Adam, the father of mankind, does not exist now [in our time] but exists in his own time. We cannot perceive that time so as to witness it, but if our perception were comprehensive enough, it could perceive the times of the past and the future—not in a passing way but in full detail. For

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[812] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II: p. 35.

example, [we could] witness all the moments of the life of the prophet Jesus, son of Mary, as well as all his miracles. The reason we do not see them now is because our vision is too weak and the hole through which we view the world is too thin and limited. It only shows us the current moment, not even the moments that have just passed. Now, if hypothetically you were able to rise above the cycle of time, you would see all of these. You would see all the acts of the first and last beings and all the works of mankind and the *jinn*. All beings, from humans to animals, and from *jinn* to angels, would be in their own determined time and place without the slightest change in their modes of existence, nor would they have moved back or forth in the least. They would all continue to exist as they were. But this vision is possible only through the inner eye, meaning the non-temporal eye, not with the physical eye. Even if all beings were to unite so as to try to change a particular form in a temporal unit, they could not affect it in the slightest. If a single speck of dust was on someone's clothes at a particular moment in the past, and if that moment passed, that single speck would not be removed. And if anyone were to witness that single speck of dust on those clothes at that particular moment, he would necessarily see it with that single speck of dust. Amazingly, the Qur'an has explained this concept with great clarity and brilliance:

> *And the Book shall be set in place; and thou wilt see the sinners fearful at what is in it, and saying, "Alas for us! How is it with this Book, that it leaves nothing behind, small or great, but it has numbered it?" And they shall find all they wrought present, and thy Lord shall not wrong anyone.*[813]

On the Day of Resurrection, when all of humanity is revived and gathered to account for their actions, they will be beyond this temporal dimension and will be informed of all their actions. If a person has attained a high station in purifying his soul [in the world], it is possible for him to attain knowledge of

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[813] Qur'an 18: 49.

all beings. Indeed, all being will be present before him. If the limits of time and space were removed from beings that were placed in time and space, all beings that existed previously, all beings that exist now, and all beings that will exist in the future would become present, and one could perceive them at once and in one place, in such a way that space would no longer put a veil before one's eyes. If time were not to exist, then the past and the future would be meaningless. Everything would be fixed and present. This would also apply to space; that is to say, in that situation, we would exist at a higher plane, where at a single moment we would have command and dominion over all beings and we would know about the past, present, and future, and all places. This is because [at such a station] that which is beyond time (*lā zamān*) takes command over all times, and that which is above space (*lā makān*) has dominion over all spaces. This is the mode of the knowledge of the invisible world given to all prophets, the Prophet of Islam, and all the Imāms, and about which we learn in the *ḥadīth* and biographies of these individuals.

After leaving this world, we will have authority over our actions, because our souls, which are by nature detached, will be liberated from the bounds of space and time. Like birds, our detached souls, which are sacred, are imprisoned in the cage of the body for a few days where they need water and food. Once they break free of their cages and fly away, they find themselves free in an infinite sacred universe. They become aware of all places, and accompany all people and all things.

Our rational souls, or rather our true human nature that is the vicegerent of God, are neither temporal nor spatial. God has confined them to this material form, these bodies bound by space and time. Therefore, as long as we depend on our material bodies, we must suffer. We want to become aware of the detached world, which is bound by neither time nor space. But we are separated from that world by our attachments to matter and because of our various wants and desires. We are drunk on the smell of this putrefied worldly carcass, so drunk that our senses are blind and deaf to seeing and hearing the sacred call

of prophets and saints and those who are nigh to His sacred sanctuary. But we must in the end sever our attachments to this world, and return to that vast and sanctified realm of detachment. Indeed, we belong—solely and entirely—to God, and will return unto Him. *"Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return."*[814] Every man ultimately has to meet his Lord: *"O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him."*[815]

Even those who do not willingly undertake this journey towards detachment, whether they are blissful or wretched, they will face their actions [on the Day of Reckoning]. Death is ordained for us all; this movement from the world of matter and time towards the world of detachment is an engendering process that we all must experience. Therefore all people, the fortunate and the ill-fated, the believer and the disbeliever, will all experience a detached state of their existence. And once they experience that, they will perceive and have dominion over all their actions, bearing witness to themselves as they commit every one of their acts, along with all their sins and rewards and punishments. But this witnessing is not simply their seeing themselves (separately and objectively); rather just as we see ourselves in this world, we will be existentially aware of our own intentions and actions in the Hereafter.

The Illusive Nature of the *ākil wa ma'kūl* Argument

In heaven and hell, each person will see all of his good and evil actions not only in their forms and their effects, but also in the nature and reality of the actions. Man will see himself with all the acts he has committed throughout his life, from the very beginning until the end, all at the same time. The true nature of obedience and submission to the Truth and the reality of his disobedience, misdeeds, and immorality will be revealed to him in their true spiritual forms.

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[814] Qur'an 2: 156

[815] Qur'an 14: 6.

With this explanation it becomes clear how weak and baseless the so-called "eater and the eaten" (*ākil wa ma'kūl*) argument is. This is because it assumes the primacy of matter, meaning that a thing's essence (the "thingness" of a thing) is based on its material substance and not its form. Even children would reject such a claim.

If you dissolve sugar in vinegar, even a child would refuse to take it, although the material substance of both is the same. That child knows that the essence and the *thing-ness* of sugar is in its form as sugar, not solely its material substance. If you mix straw with vinegar, an animal would refuse to eat it, because it is concerned not with the material substance, but with the form of that substance. Here, the material substance remains the same, but the form changes. Matter is fundamentally ambiguous and by itself is neither actualized nor determined.

On the Day of Reckoning all corpses and bodies will be resurrected completely and perfectly, regardless of whether they ate others or were eaten by others, because the natures of things are based on their forms. These forms are placed on matter, and are never mixed or diluted. No form transforms into another form. The matter and *hyle* preserve those forms as matter is individuated and determined. This preservation of the form persists throughout. Thus, Sabzawārī says:

> As a form is never transformed to another form:
> It will be preserved upon *hyle* and continues flowing.[816]

Even though forms are veiled from us by time and space and we cannot perceive all of them at a given time, these forms are all perfectly preserved and exist in their own particular moments and are located within their own space. All are preserved, including our own good and evil acts.

> Then all things having occurred, now or later,
> Contained in the vessels of time, presiding.

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[816] Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, p. 345.

"That which you have shall perish
And that which is with God remain."[817]

Indeed the prerequisite for something to exist is existence itself. Existence could not change to or be predicated by non-existence. All existent things in the real and existent world are contained in the vessels of time, even though it may seem to us that they have perished and are of the past. Yet they do not cease to exist for God, the All-Knower of the manifest and non-manifest (*'Ālim al-sirr wa'l-khafyāt*). The particular action we committed may seem hidden or forgotten to us, yet for God, who knows and is aware of all things, it is entirely present. "*Not so much as the weight of an ant in heaven and earth escapes from Him, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but it is in a Manifest Book...*"[818] Did God not say, "*That which you have shall perish And that which is with God remain*"?[819]

Our actions have two different aspects: one is their natural and outward aspect, which is attributed to us and belongs to us. The other is their heavenly and inner aspect, which belongs to God.

Only the outward form of our actions is subject to decay, degeneration, and decline. Their inward form, which is their divine aspect, is always stable and fixed in the external world and exists with God. When the veil of time is cast aside for us, then all of our actions, as well as all the other existent things that with the passing of time became hidden by what has come after them, will at once and instantly reappear and become present. All our actions, which we may have previously believed were completely hidden from all others, will reappear with our voluntary or compulsory death.

Everything that has been hidden will then become known.
Every detail of our actions, even the most insignificant and minute, will be presented.

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[817] Qur'an 16: 96.
[818] Qur'an 34: 3.
[819] Qur'an 16: 96.

And as that Book never leaves a thing;
Neither a thing small nor a thing great.[820]

As the Qur'an states:

And the Book shall be set in place; and thou wilt see the sinners fearful at what is in it, and saying, "Alas for us! How is it with this Book, that it leaves nothing behind, small or great, but it has numbered it?" And they shall find all they wrought present, and thy Lord shall not wrong anyone.[821]

A Turkish poet so eloquently commented on the lessons hidden in these verses as he wrote,

Do not fool me, O ascetic man
There exists no fire in hell
From here they take the fire
that burns in hell

This fire is our deeds that we committed in this world. God does not subject anyone to injustice. We set ourselves to go to hell or pave our way to heaven.

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[820] Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, pp. 345–346.

تُبلَى إذَا غِطاَ زَمانِنا انْخَزَل   مَراتِبُ السيالِ مَعْ كُلِّ عَمَلْ○
فذ لِكَ اَلكتاب لَن يُغادِرا   شَيئاً صَغائِرا أَو لا كَبائِرا

[821] Qur'an 18: 48–49.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Eighth Discourse

Removing Misperceptions and Doubt about Bodily Resurrection—I

God, the All-Wise, has stated in his Noble Book,

> *When heaven is split open, when the stars are scattered, when the seas swarm over, when the tombs are overthrown, then a soul shall know its works, the former and the latter.*[822]

Views Regarding Resurrection According to Mullā Ṣadrā

In his *Four Journeys of the Soul* (*Asfār al-Arba'ah*) Mullā Ṣadrā gives a survey of the various beliefs regarding the Resurrection and the ways in which it will take place. According to him, some of the common people and the ignorant say that the Resurrection of souls and of bodies are both impossible. These are the naturalists, materialists, and others in whose view the *Sharī'ah* and Islamic philosophy are worthless. They believe that man is simply a physical and sensible body and deny the detached nature of the rational soul. They believe that with death man ceases to exist, and believe the happiness and wretchedness of man is like that of plants and animals, bound and limited to worldly pleasures and pains that occur to the body. This view is in contradiction with the *Sharī'ah* as well as with the intellect, because the philosophers and the scholars of the *Sharī'ah* have their own opinions about this issue, which are often different from one another.

According to narrations, Galen [is said] to have had doubts or at least hesitation on whether the soul is like the physical body and ceases to exist with death and will not be resurrected, or it is a detached substance, which subsists, is fixed and eternal, and will survive after death and will resurrect.

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[822] Qur'an 82: 1–6.

In addition to the refutation [of bodily Resurrection] some other thinkers use another argument that "the non-existent cannot return" (*al-ma'dūm lā yu'ād*); and once the body ceases to exist, it will not return, and its Resurrection is impossible; therefore bodily Resurrection is an impossibility.

In response to this argument Muslim theologians (*mutikallimūn*) state that first of all, the Return of something that ceases to exist is not impossible; secondly, man does not cease to exist after death. Rather, some decomposable and non-decomposable (*tajziyah*) parts survive from a person's body, and those parts constitute the origin of his engendered body that will be resurrected in the Hereafter.

They also present the Qur'anic verses on Resurrection that allude to the same meaning. Basically, the theologians try to correct the above argument on the impossibility of bodily Resurrection by two means, stating that both the intellect and revelation reject it and consider it baseless and false. Rather, both the intellect and revelation state that the same body that committed all deeds in the world will be resurrected. In other words, that same person who was responsible for certain actions and who observed the obligatory religious duties commanded by the intellect and the *Sharī'ah* will be resurrected. Yet it must be known that to extirpate this argument against bodily Resurrection, one must go to the root of the argument, which is the claim that man ceases to exist at death, and one must respond to that assumption, as we have done before.

Yet those among the philosophers and scholars of the *Sharī'ah* who are truly seekers of the truth are in agreement about the certainty of the Return and the Hereafter, although they differ on the ways in which it will occur.

The majority of Muslim theologians and all jurists (*fuqahā'*) and scholars of *ḥadīth* understand Resurrection as corporeal, for they believe the spirit is a corporeal entity that flows and permeates the body, as fire permeates coal, or water flows within the flower, or oil is contained within olives.

The majority of Muslim philosophers, especially those of the Peripatetic (Mashshā'ī) school, understand Resurrection to

be entirely spiritual. In other words, they believe that the Resurrection is solely intellective (*'aqli*), for the body ceases to exist once its form and accidents become non-existent. Since the Return of a non-existent entity back into existence is impossible, the body cannot be resurrected. Yet because the soul is a detached substance, it will subsist. Once it severs all its fetters to matter, i.e., after death, it will return to the non-material and detached realm. Many of the great philosophers and masters of gnosis and a group of the theologians believe in both forms of Resurrection, arguing that the human soul is detached and could return to the body after death.

Most Christian thinkers and those who believe in reincarnation argue the same. They only differ with Muslim scholars and their followers in that they believe spirit is *created*, that is, it originated from and will return to the body in the Hereafter. The reincarnationists, however, believe that the spirits are uncreated (*qadīm*), returning again and again to this world. They reject the belief in an afterworld of a corporeal heaven and hell, which the Muslims hold.

Those who believe in both the bodily and spiritual Resurrection also differ with each other as to whether the body that will be resurrected is this terrestrial body or the archetypal form of that body. There are further differences as to whether the other-worldly body accounts for all the same parts, shapes, and forms, or it does not. It seems that the majority of Muslim scholars tend to believe that the resurrected body is different from the worldly body in terms of its creation and form. They cite Qur'anic verses and traditions such as one *ḥadīth* that states those who reside in heaven enjoy pure countenances that are youthful and beardless.

> *Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs—We shall certainly roast them at a Fire; as often as their skins are wholly burned, We shall give them in exchange other skins, that they*

> *may taste the chastisement. Surely God is All-mighty, All-wise.*[823]

and,

> *Is not He, who created the heavens and earth, able to create the like of them? Now, what if someone replies that, according to these verses, the body that will suffer chastisement or attain blessings is different from that body which obeyed or disobeyed?* [824]

One may insist that the body that will be subject to torment and punishment in the Hereafter is not the same body that obeyed God or committed sins in the world. We would respond that the criterion here is the spirit, for it is the spirit that perceives reward and punishment, even if it is mediated by the body or other means. Thus we recognize the unity of the person from childhood to adulthood and old age, even though the form and capacities, the dimensions, and all the parts of his body along with his faculties are changed. For example, if an elderly person was punished for a crime that he committed during his youth, we would not say that we are punishing a different person.

Thus far, we have surveyed the various schools and views of eschatology. It will be demonstrated that what will be revived on the Day of Resurrection is the very same person, both in his own body and in his soul. The soul will be exactly the same and the body will be exactly the same (*bi 'aynah*),[825] such that if you were to see him, you would recognize that he is the same such-and-such a man whom you knew when he lived in the world.

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[823] Qur'an 4: 56.

[824] Qur'an 36: 81.

[825] In his postscript (*ta'liqah*) to *Asfār*, Sabziwārī, states, "This means that the body in the intermediate realm and the Hereafter is the same as the body in this world, although not with its terrestrial or natural attribution. Rather it is attributed to its ipseity (*huwīyah*), for the essence of a thing is its form; in terms of the body, this would mean the bodily form, not its material substance..." See *Asfār*, IV: pp. 163–166.

Perhaps it is possible that the body and soul will go through a process whereby they become united [once again] and the intellect sees them as absolutely one. Whoever denies this meaning [of Resurrection] has denied the *Sharī'ah*, is devoid of wisdom, and is flawed in [his understanding of] Islamic philosophy, and his denial implies and necessitates the denial of many evident injunctions of the Qur'an.[826] When many Muslim theologians such as Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī[827] and his cohorts discussed their views about the resurrected body, they argued that in the Hereafter man will be resurrected in the form of the same material and gross body (*jism kathīf*). To explain further we will provide a summary and free translation of their position, as articulated and commented upon by Mullā Ṣadrā.

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, Fakhr Rāzi and those who followed his perspective presented a view of the Resurrection whereby the disparate material parts [of the body] reintegrate with those original parts that remain intact and for a second time form the same worldly form of the body so that the soul can enter into the body's frame. Yet they did not realize that their premise assumes Resurrection and Return to this world, not to the Hereafter. Such a conclusion leads to a Return to this world of matter, action, and acquisition, not the Return to the Hereafter, which is the realm of reckoning and perfection. That premise ultimately leads to [believing in] the doctrine of reincarnation and contradicts many Qur'anic verses:

> *We have decreed among you Death: We shall not be outstripped...that We may exchange the likes of you, and make you to grow again in a fashion you know not.*[828]

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[826] A free translation of Mullā Ṣadrā's statement in the *Asfār*, Hurūfi edition, vol. 9, 163–6.

[827] Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (543 or 544–606/1149 or 50–1209) is one of the most distinguished Muslim theologians and commentators of the Qur'an. His most widely acknowledged book is the monumental commentary on the Qur'an known as *Tafsir-i kabīr*.

[828] Qur'an 56: 60–61.

or,

> *We created them, and We strengthened their joints; and, when We will, We shall exchange their likes.*[829]

For those who possess insight, it is clear that the second creation, which is the existence in the Hereafter, is different from that of this world, a body created of water, dust, and clay. Death and revival begin the journey back to the Divine and proximity to Him, not a Return to this world of matter and its dark, earthen, and gross body.

Mullā Ṣadrā then adds that Fakhr Rāzi presented his response to this question and used four Qur'anic verses[830] to prove his point the way he understood it. Yet the comments and reasons he provided in fact were irrelevant and out of the framework of his discussion and did not correspond to the meaning of the verses. It could even be said that Fakhr Rāzī in fact misinterpreted those verses, but to avoid a lengthy discussion we will not deal with those issues here. In short, this is basically the limitations of the theologians' understanding of the Return and Resurrection of the body and the soul. Fakhr Rāzī's exposition in no way proves the presence of creation in the afterlife; nor does it even expound a belief in the Day of Judgment, not to mention his erroneous reasoning and misinterpretation of the meaning and intent of the Qur'anic verses. The final conclusion that one arrives at through Fakhr Rāzī's words is that it is possible for the disparate and scattered pars of the worldly body to be gathered and integrated, effusing into its previous, and now non-existent, form, after which the spirit will once again be attached to this gross and dark body.

The world of the Hereafter is called the Day of the Rising (*Qiyāmah*), because on that day the spirit rises from this natural body and becomes existentially independent; it stands on its own essence and the essence of its originator and Creator. In our world the spirit is dependent on the body because of its

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[829] Qur'an 76: 28.

[830] See Qur'an 56: 58–59, 63–64, 68–69, and 71–72.

existential weakness, whereas in the Hereafter the body is dependent solely on the spirit, All in all, Fakhr Rāzī's words on Return and Resurrection are more akin to the position of deniers of the Hereafter than to that of its proponents and believers.[831]

Mullā Ṣadrā then explicates the position of the naturalists and its correspondence to al-Rāzī's stance. Then he explains the divine intent for those verses that refer to the Day of Return and other verses that refer to an awareness of the hidden realms. Afterwards, he discusses the reasons that common people and even scholars of the Islamic sciences and the *Sharī'ah* are averse to and distressed by the hidden realms. What we can gather from the words of that great master (Mullā Ṣadrā) is that the realm of the Hereafter is other than this realm. It is in a vertical relationship to this world, being more perfect than and superior to this world.

If this same dark and gross matter were to constitute the realm of the Hereafter or even subsist there, that realm would no longer be the "Hereafter," and it would not be the scene of the unfolding of the Day of Judgment. Rather, it would be a terrestrial realm, and its existence would be a terrestrial existence. Those who believe in such a world of the Hereafter are in reality denying the Hereafter itself. They are in fact holding on to their worldly lives dearly, and just like the naturalists and materialists, they understand this terrestrial existence as being eternal.

Belief in bodily Resurrection, not in a materialistic and naturalistic Return, is what religion expects from us, and the intellect provides proofs for it. In that realm man receives from God rewards or punishments with his detached body, not with his natural and material body. Those who rely purely on the Islamic sciences and the *Sharī'ah* do not distinguish between the detached body and the material body. They assume that [the Resurrection of] the detached body is like that of the material and natural body, even though believing in the Resurrection of the material body conflicts with the essential doctrinal

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[831] Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī, *The Four Journeys of the Soul* (*Asfār al-arba'ah*), vol. 9, pp. 153–158.

requirements of Islam, the Qur'anic verses, and the *ahādīth* received from the Infallible [Imāms]. In truth, this false view on the Resurrection can be traced back to the materialist, naturalist, and reincarnationist schools.

The body in the Hereafter is subtler than this material body; on the Day of Resurrection people will not need to excrete or defecate their bodily waste. Many verses of the Qur'an and traditions denote that whatever is eaten or drunk becomes part of their body. In that realm of existence, the people of paradise have a youthful and happy form, without any bodily defects such as deafness, blindness, or lameness. They have beautiful and enchanting faces, as the Qur'an indicates: "*And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord.*"[832] In contrast, the people of hell have ugly and repulsive forms, and will be resurrected blind. All this proves that the body in the Hereafter is not a material and gross body like bodies that appear in this world. Rather, it is a subtle body, a body that appears through the manifestation of the soul and its appearance in the world of forms. We will expound on this in the next discourse, God willing.

[832] Qur'an 39: 69.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Thirty-Ninth Discourse

Removing Misperceptions and Doubt about Bodily Resurrection: Presenting the Truth—II

God, the All-Wise, has stated in his Noble Book,

> *And fear God, unto whom you shall be mustered.*[833]

> *Surely if you die or are slain, it is unto God you shall be mustered.*[834]

> *And know that God stands between a man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be mustered.*[835]

> *Upon the day when the earth is split asunder from about them as they hasten forth; that is a mustering easy for Us.*[836]

One of the objections raised against the belief in physical Resurrection is the following. The earth's capacity and measure is determined, defined, and limited, whereas the number of souls is unlimited. A limited space cannot contain an unlimited number of bodies. Therefore physical Resurrection is impossible because of the lack of space to hold the unlimited number of souls.

Mullā Ṣadrā responded to this objection in the following terms. One of our most evident principles is that there is no specific contingency in the [Resurrection of] the physical body per se. What is required for the individuation of man and the resurrected person is his corporeal form, through whatever mode of embodiment it may have. Man's body in the Hereafter will be existentiated and created according to the attributes of

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[833] Qur'an 5: 96.
[834] Qur'an 3: 158.
[835] Qur'an 8: 24.
[836] Qur'an 50: 44.

his own soul, not according to the material forms that may appear from the material substance [of his body], nor according to the potentialities of matter, such as it would appear in the terrestrial realm.

One could also give a different response to this objection, namely that the measure and capacity of a material substance can expand. For prime matter and prime *hyle* is pure potentiality and sheer capacity. In itself and essentially, it has no measure and is not determined to a specified limit or number. *Hyle* is essentially capable of unlimited divisions, and whatever measure and divisions it has are accidents external to it. Nor is it preconditioned to subsist and appear in earthly form such that [in the Hereafter] it would reappear as the same body. It is also not necessary for all souls to be resurrected in a physical body, for some will directly ascend to the sacred Precinct [of God] right after they are separated from the realm of physical bodies, and will reside with those brought nigh to God (*muqarrabīn*). Yet the primary response to this objection remains the first response given above.

Heaven and Hell and the Fallacy of Spatial Limitation According to Mullā Ṣadrā

One of the objections against physical Resurrection is that if heaven and hell do exist and are physical realms, then where are they located? And where are they located in the celestial realm? If one or both of them are located above the outer limits of space, i.e., the *primum mobile* or the outermost sphere (*muḥaddad al-jahāt*), then there must be a space in *beyond-space (lā makān)*, and there must be modality (direction) in the *beyond-direction.*

Now, if heaven and hell are located within a celestial sphere or between two different spheres, it would either necessitate the intermingling of the two spheres or the existence of a space located between or separate from the two spheres. Yet all such necessary implications [of the physicality of heaven and hell] are impossible. Additionally, such assumptions conflict with the

divine ordinance: "*...and to a garden whose breadth is as the heavens and earth, prepared for the godfearing.*"[837]

This was a paraphrase of the objection. As for its refutation, it should become clear through those principles we have already articulated and clarified.

Yet the Muslim theologians (*mutakallimīn*) have been unable to respond to this objection. Some have stated that "a void is possible," or that "heaven and hell have not yet been created."

Some others have said that the sky will be cleaved sufficiently to contain paradise in itself. If only they would be brave enough to say "we do not know" and would, like ordinary believers, emulate others and be content with the injunctions of religion. If only they had proclaimed, "We do not know; God and his Prophet know better than we!"[838]

Then, Mullā Ṣadrā proceeds to address the theologians' argument. He states that their most serious problem is not that they deny Resurrection, but that they struggle to determine the location of heaven and hell. Their objection presupposes that heaven and hell require a space that is of the same type as the space of this world. But essentially, trying to prove a space [in the Hereafter] for these celestial realities with [terrestrial] measures and norms is impossible. Therefore, their objection is unfounded from the very beginning.

The realm of the Hereafter is a perfect realm. Nothing is external to its substance. A thing that has such a quality and mode of existence cannot be located in space, just as the entirety of this universe is not located in a particular space, so that we could refer to or locate it outside of that space, or even within that space.

The key to this issue is that the space that each thing occupies is the position and relation of that thing to something else. The position of a thing is always determined by its relation to a contrasted thing that is also external to it. Yet with relation to the Hereafter, nothing of the same quality (that can be

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[837] Qur'an 2: 133.

[838] *Asfār*, 6: 200–201.

contrasted to it) exists outside the domain of the Hereafter. Otherwise it would not be the complete and perfect realm that it is. Nothing that is of the same quality can be imagined within it, nor can anything be separated from it, for the Hereafter to be located in relation to that thing.

Since we have assumed the Hereafter is complete and perfect, there can be no thing external or internal to it, from which one could refer to it by the senses. Therefore it does not have location (*ayn* [where-ness]) nor position (*waḍ'*), i.e., space or relationality, to another thing. It is on the basis of this principle that the "Teacher of Philosophers" has ruled that the universe, in its entirety, has no location or space.

Thus we understand and know clearly that location in space for a realm that is complete and perfect is impossible. This sophistic claim regarding space [and denying the physical Resurrection] stems from comparing falsely the particular with the universal and confusing the imperfect with the perfect.

Thereafter, Mullā Ṣadrā outlines various problems with this view. In response, he understands the Hereafter to be the inner reality of this world and in a vertical relationship to it. Indeed these eschatological issues are inherently so difficult and complex that pure analogy and philosophical reasoning are simply insufficient to properly understand them. That is the reason scholars have mostly tried to answer these questions through mystical explanations or the experiences of people of contemplation and witnessing as well as the *aḥādīth* and narrations transmitted through the Infallible Imāms, and verses from the Qur'an.

Those who do not have sufficient knowledge of philosophical reasoning and theosophical knowledge should not enter such discussions. Otherwise, by presenting their baseless views on such complex issues, they become subjects of derision for those who are spiteful. This will only lead them to lose the confidence of ordinary believers as well as the trust of people of insight.

Visualizing Resurrection with the Elemental Body

Comprehensive research in order to properly understand bodily Resurrection requires seven principal premises concerning physical Resurrection.

The First Premise

It was previously mentioned that the essence of a thing is in its form, not its material substance. The form and differentia of external existents is really what gives a thing its definition and identity and what individuates and particularizes that thing. That is what existentiates an existent and assigns a particular name to it. Its form is what differentiates that being from other beings and forms it into a discrete entity.

The term "form" (*ṣūrah*) is not what we commonly call "shape" or "physical appearance" in daily discourse. Rather, it is that particular attribute that is combined with ambiguous matter and differentiates it from all other existent beings, such as the form of "human-ness, "horse-ness," and the like. The form of man is that same rational soul that differentiates him from all other things. Therefore, the criterion for particularizing and individuating all things is not the prime matter that is also called the "matter of matters" (*māddat al-mawād*) or prime *hyle*. It is common among all things, because all existent beings in the natural and material realm have a portion of that prime matter. But those beings are existentiated and particularized through their forms, which is also what causes them to become discernible from one another.

The Second Premise

The forms of all the various beings, by which those beings are individuated and determined, do not perish. After death and annihilation of the material substance in the natural realm, these forms subsist and thus remain constant and without any change or transformation in the realm of aeon (*'ālam-i dahr*).

In the course of time the forms of beings, such as the forms of a person along with his good and evil deeds, are hidden from

our perception, even though their existence may continue. This is because we are temporal beings. We, along with our senses and perceptions, are subject to the gradual passage of time, and only sense the present and the current moment, being blind to the past or the future.

From our very birth, our material substance is in flux, and is by its essence in motion, just as time is a being in motion and flow. It is the one continuous being that never ceases, that is continuously in motion by its very essence. Since our existence is temporal and corresponds to time's continuous motion, we perpetually move forward until we leave this world. Thereafter, we journey through the intermediate realm, which is also temporal, until we become annihilated in the Divine Essence. We finally arrive at a point beyond time, and having attained dominion over it, we will, at that time, perceive and witness every single moment and instance of our lives presented to us all at once.

For as soon as form attains existence, it becomes impossible for that form and all its previous particularities to be subject to accidents such as time and become non-existence. The existent cannot become non-existent, and existence and non-existence are two contradictory things. Therefore every existent is forever existent in its own time, meaning that that thing is constant and persists and is perpetuated, of course delimited and particularized by its specific time [of existence]. It will not cease to exist in the realm of aeon (*'ālam-i dahr*).

When the book [of the deeds] of a person is written, it is no longer possible for it *not to exist* at its own time. However, it can become non-existent in another frame of time. [If God wills] He can disregard our deeds, forgive them, or command His angels not to record [evil] deeds and sins, and make all of them *non-existent.* All of these possibilities exist if God wills. However, our original deeds themselves never become non-existent.

The Third Premise

Existent beings have an outward and an inward reality. All natural beings have a physical body, a spiritual body, and a celestial body. Every deed of mankind has an outward and an inward reality, whether it is a good or evil deed. For example, [daily] prayer has a clear outward reality; its inner reality is the intention that the prayer is based on and that could be hypocritical or sincere, and [could lead to] inner peace or agitation and dispersion. To gauge an act, we must really know what station man has attained inwardly and how high his ascension has taken him [towards God].

Man himself also has an inward and outward reality. His outward reality in an undifferentiated way is similar—that is, all human beings possess the human physical form. But their inner realities vary greatly and do not have the same constitution; whereas one is a believer, another may be a disbeliever; one may be just, while another is depraved; one may intend good, while the other have evil intentions. There are many who have a strong relationship with their Lord, whereas others do not. Some have clear and peaceful minds, whereas many others are agitated and distressed. Many follow their own desires and whims, while others subdue their desires.

From the point of view of perception, beliefs, peaceful natures, qualities, and traits, the inner reality of every individual is unique and different from that of other individuals. We cannot comprehend these in the visible realm, because they pertain to the inner and invisible (*ghayb*) realm.

The Fourth Premise

As long as man is attached to this world and is the slave of his desires and whims, he only sees the outward aspects of things and is blind to the inner realities. Sometimes the inner realities may have thousands of various forms, and yet we may not perceive them. But once man begins to journey towards God, he will move beyond the limits of this form of perception, and his inner faculties will begin to work. Only then will he be

able to see the inner realities of his actions. In other words, in the visible realm, our access to the external world is through our external senses. Through these senses we are able to connect to the external world and gain knowledge about it. If not for these senses, we would not have had any knowledge of the external world, and existence and non-existence would have been the same [for us]. Once we leave this world, these senses will be taken from us. But man has an inner light through which he can comprehend the reality of all things. That inner light is associated with the soul and not the body and its external senses. It is that inner light and inner sense that allows man to perceive the inner realities of things in the Hereafter.

Even those external senses and emotions function because of and in accordance with that inner light and its emanations. That inner light allows these senses to become sources of our knowledge. As Sabziwarī stated,

> The soul possesses within its being an (inner) ear and eye, an ability to taste and touch, and other such faculties. The faculties of the body are the extension and the shadow of these faculties of the soul. It is by means of these inner faculties that man has these spiritual apprehensions and perceives the particularity of forms in the sensibilities while he is asleep, or when he is drunk or ill, or when he experiences unveiling.[839]

[And Rūmī wrote:]

> Besides these five (physical) senses there are five (spiritual) senses:
> Those (latter) are like red gold, while these (physical) senses are like copper.
> The health of the former arises from the flourishing state of the body:
> the health of the latter arises from the ruin of the body.

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[839] Sabzawārī, *Manẓūmah*, p. 335.

Seek ye the well-being of the former sense from the physician;
beg ye the well-being of the latter sense from the Beloved.[840]

This is because that is the realm where *"the secrets are tried,"*[841] and revealed. There, prayer appears in its inner form, not this outer form. Whatever inner and celestial reality it may have had in the world, it will expose that inner reality there. The reality of prayer would be revealed in a form in that realm that is beyond comprehension. We will witness its inner reality, which may be comprised of our pure or hypocritical intentions, our attentiveness to and immersion in divine Beauty, or our inattentiveness to and negligence of that Beauty. There, prayer will appear in a form that is beyond comprehension by our intellect. On occasions [in this world] we might have performed our canonical prayer for the sake of heaven and heavenly maidens. This was done basically for the sake of the desires of the base soul and not for the sake of the true meaning or intention of prayer. These intentions will then appear in their heavenly and angelic forms in the Hereafter. On other occasions, we might have performed [daily prayer] to attract attention and for other hypocritical reasons. These prayers will appear in the Hereafter in the form of snakes and scorpions, because they were not for God. Rather they were performed hypocritically, and hypocrisy in acts of worship is forbidden. Such will be the case of all acts, including transgressions. Transgressions and cardinal sins will appear in the form of fire and chains, the tree Zaqqūm,[842] boiling pus and filth, and

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[840] Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II: 107, as quoted in *Manẓūmah*, p. 335.

[841] Referring to Qur'an 86: 9.

[842] The tree Zaqqūm is a bitter and pungent tree in hell: *"Verily, the tree of Zaqqum, will be the food of the sinners; Like boiling oil, it will boil in the bellies; Like the boiling of scalding water; [It will] Seize him and drag him into the midst of Blazing Fire; Then pour over his head the torment of boiling water; Taste you [this]. Verily, you were [pretending to be] the mighty, the generous! Verily, this is what whereof you used to doubt!"* Qur'an 44: 43–50.

ultimate darkness and punishments, filled with all forms of terrible and frightening things. These very vices that man possesses constantly inflict his rational soul while he is entirely unaware—or chooses to remain unaware—nor does he even try to understand. Yet they will appear in their true celestial forms under the truthful light of the Hereafter. For that is the realm of truth, not like this world, which is one of derivative (*majāzī*) worlds where only the external reality is accounted for.

Imagine a place where there are beautiful flowers, gentle breezes, and sweet-voiced nightingales on the one hand, but on the other hand it is also filthy and full of dangerous animals. In a cold and frosty winter, all these creatures will take shelter and hide, because the conditions are not conducive for them to appear and roam. But as soon as the sun emerges, it will prepare life to flourish once again through its warmth and brilliance. The enchanting flowers will fill the air with their fragrance, as the beautiful nightingales and canaries, perched on the groves, sing their melodies and play their music. Along with them emerge the filth and slime, filling the air with their stench, and snakes and scorpions that slither from their dens. Each creature reveals and demonstrates the truth of its own being, a necessary result of the reality of this sun of truth emerging. As Ḥāfiẓ states:

> Tomorrow, when the truth reveals itself
> Shameful will be the traveler who took
> the path of falsehood.[843]

On the Day of Resurrection when the light of God's Unity appears and the light of truth radiates, all actions present themselves. All that will befall man on that day, whether blessings or punishments, will be the consequence of man's own deeds. Rather, they are indeed man's deeds, the essence of his actions and interactions, which through the light of divine

843 Ḥāfiẓ, *Divān*, edited by Ḥasan Pezhmān, p.53.

Unicity present their realities and true natures.[844] We have sufficiently discussed this issue before.

It is for this reason that God always warns man about his deeds [in this world]. For in reality, man is what his actions are. Man's true self emerges through his actions: *"Thy Lord wrongs not His servants."*[845]

In this manner, man realizes that the reality of the burning fire (*waqūd*) of hell is in fact what was in his heart and his evil intentions. That paradise, those lovely maidens, and *"God's good pleasure which is greater"*[846] are nothing but his sincerity and purity of intention and thought. After this truth is revealed, what excuse can man bring to God? And at that moment, how could he possibly hold God to account?

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, beseeched God in that famous prayer he imparted to Kumayl: *"You have proof against me in all those actions (that I have committed), and yet I have no excuse against that which your judgment brings upon me."*[847]

The Fifth Premise

Ma'ād is returning to God. The road of that journey is not horizontal and parallel to this world; rather, it is vertical. To elaborate on this further we must explain the relationship between the natural world, the intermediate world, and the Hereafter in terms of priority and posteriority. Common people believe that God created Adam in heaven, and then allowed Satan to deceive and dominate over him. Then He banished Adam from heaven, and thereafter Adam came to this world,

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[844] The great scholars have disagreed as to whether the blessings and punishments received have a reality external to the actions themselves, and are the rewards and punishments given separately for those actions, or whether they are the inner reality of the actions themselves (and thus do not have an external reality). Mullā Ṣadrā has reasoned that they are the inner reality of the actions themselves.

[845] Qur'an 41: 46.

[846] Qur'an 9: 72.

[847] Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāḥ al-mutihajjid*, pp. 587–592.

and the ages passed one by one until we arrive at our own time. Then we are born, we live for a time, and we die. Afterward, in a later time we enter the intermediate realm, and once that period ends, we enter the realm of Resurrection. In that realm time continues eternally as long as God is. This erroneous belief about time is actually the source of many problems and errors in the beliefs of the ordinary people. The truth is that these worlds are interconnected. This means that the intermediate world encompasses the material world. It exists now; it is not that it will be created later. And in turn, the "Realm of Resurrection and Souls" (*'ālam al-Qiyāmah wa al-nafs*), encompasses both the natural and the intermediate worlds. Thus this realm currently exists; it is not that it will be created at some point in the future, and after that the world will end. This means that the intermediate realm and the Resurrection Day do not hold a horizontal relation to this world. Therefore, in order to reach the two realms of the intermediate realm and the Resurrection, we do not have to journey through linear time and arrive there when this world ends. Rather, we must journey upwards, towards the detached spiritual realms. We must undertake this spiritual journey until we arrive at the intermediate realm and from there journey vertically upwards until we arrive at the realm of the Resurrection. We will undertake this journey, whether voluntarily and willingly before death, or unwillingly after death.

He who observes the *Sharī'ah*, the injunctions of religion, and the tradition of the Prophet purifies his heart and goes beyond the realm of desires, appetite, and love of the world, and begins his vertical journey towards God. The first station in this journey is the intermediate realm. There is no doubt or illusion that he perceives his own position in the intermediate realm. But what does the intermediate realm mean here? It is that same realm of forms and detachment from matter. By virtue of reaching this realm, man interacts with other beings that do not possess matter or weight. If he continues his spiritual purification and abides by the Prophetic injunctions, he will experience the realm of Resurrection in all its signs and effects.

Thus, it has been narrated from the prophet Jesus Christ that *"He who has not been reborn cannot penetrate the kingdom of the heavens."*[848]

If a man does not undertake this journey willingly, he will necessarily undertake it through death, when the connection between his soul and body ends. He will then begin his vertical journey and enter the intermediate realm. Having reached that realm, he will enter the realm of Resurrection on that same journey. This is the reality of the journey to God. Through death, we move towards God. Do we not say, *"Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return"*?[849] Is it not mentioned in various Qur'anic verses, *"unto God shall you be mustered;"*[850] *"unto Him shall you be mustered;"*[851] and *"unto Him shall you be turned"*?[852]

And where is God towards whom we will be mustered and turned? He is neither in time nor space; He is everywhere and at every time. Thus, we return unto Him on our vertical journey, ascending and attaining spiritual proximity to Him. We reach a place wherein we witness His Dominion and Power over all things.

From the very beginning of our existence we are always under the Dominion of God. We bear witness to the truth that He is everything, while He is Sufficient unto Himself (al-Ṣamad). This was alluded to in the verses we mentioned in the beginning of our discourse: *"and know that God stands between a man and his heart..."* But unfortunately we understand this reality in a chronological context and perceive *priority* and *posteriority* in terms of the linear progression of this world. We even misconceive eternity (*azal* and *abad*) as the beginning and end of time, which only further confuses the issue. God is, He always was, and always will be—at all times and with all people. The Day of Resurrection exists, as does the intermediate

[848] As quoted in Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār al-arba'ah*, 9: 218.
[849] Qur'an 2: 155.
[850] Qur'an 3: 158.
[851] Qur'an 2: 203.
[852] Qur'an 40: 21.

realm. The realms beyond the Day of Resurrection, the heavens, and the realms of the universal Divine Names exist. The Divine Essence exists. These are all real.

The Meaning of Eternity (*azal* and *abad*)

Azal does not mean the beginning of time, and *abad* does not mean its end. Rather, the meaning of *azal*, in terms of its vertical relationship to this world, is that same first creative moment (descent) that occurred at the earliest phase of creation and highest degrees of divine Power and Knowledge. *Abad* then means that final point of creation (ascent) at that highest level of creation and the highest degree of divine Power and Knowledge. The first and last moments are actually one, but have two references: when it is referred to in terms of the beginning of creation, it is termed *azal*; when referred to in terms of the final point of creation, it is termed *abad*. *Azal* is that point when the Divine, Glorified is His Name, willed to create the world from His own Essence, at that greatest stage and loftiest level, when He willed the realms of dominion and multiplicity into existence. And that point, when all beings and all of creation return unto that highest level and station, is called *abad*.

> *Azal* sprung forth from one Essence:
> That same Essence, 'tis certain, of *abad*.
> 'Tis here, where the outer
> Becomes the inner.

If, say, we take the Divine Essence—that Hidden Reality without Name or sign—as the point of origin, not like a physical point but just like a mathematical point with no dimensions, then from that point emerges the first manifestation of multiplicity, which is the divine Will. It is from there that the multiple worlds and domains emerge, coming into existence one after the other. This continues downward until it reaches the natural and material world.

In terms of multiplicity, this is the most differentiated and expansive realm, but in terms of life, knowledge, and power, it

is the most limited. A diagram will emerge, at the head of which is the Divine Name, "Unicity" (Ahad); below that are the Names "Ever-Living, All-Knowing, All-Powerful" (al-Ḥayy, al-'Alīm, and al-Qadīr). These are followed by the realm of the divine Will (*irādah* and *mashīyah*), from which emerges the universe. And in this way the multiple worlds cascade in order until we reach the lowest point of the diagram, which is the material world, also called "the darkest realm" (*aẓlam al-'awālim*).

According to the Will of God, each being is created from a different point on this diagram. After it has reached the lowest point on this journey, namely the material world, it returns to its origins. It returns by that very same upward ascension, that trajectory that returns it to the origin wherein it becomes annihilated: "*As He originated you so you will return...*"[853]

All beings in the world will return unto God. Indeed, the final end of the journey of creation is the Divine Essence. "*And that the final end is unto thy Lord...*"[854]

Now it is clear that we have designated the apex of the diagram as the station of the Divine Essence, which is beyond all Names and signs. Yet it is also clear that divine Knowledge, Power, and Life, and any of the other Divine Names and Attributes, persist throughout the entire diagram. This is so even at its lowest point, which is the natural and material world of multiplicity. Not only do the Divine Names persist, but they permeate the entire diagram. We cannot find one iota of this entire system that excludes God, where God's Names and Attributes have no access. "*God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth*";[855] therefore the entire diagram is composed of the Divine Name "the One" (al-Aḥad) from which emanates divine Light that finds manifestation in the entire universe. Hence, [we can say] that *azal* is the first and lowest point of descent towards the world of multiplicity, while *abad* is the last and highest point of ascent towards the world of Unicity.

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853 Qur'an 7: 29.
854 Qur'an 53: 42.
855 Qur'an 24: 35.

With this introduction, we have clarified the status of the intermediate world and the realm of the Resurrection Day. We can say the intermediate realm currently exists. But when we say the "world of Resurrection exists now," we are somewhat intending this loosely, because "now" is a reference to worldly time. But the Resurrection world exists in a different realm, a realm of detachment and incorporeality. Therefore, the Day of Resurrection is entirely devoid of time, and beyond it, because it is the "Realm of Spirit and Soul." Similarly, when we state, "Our spirits exist now," this is also not in a strict sense. This statement is correct in terms of the spirit's comprehensiveness and dominion over the "now." But taken in any other sense, it would be incorrect, because the spirit is incorporeal and detached and is not bound by time, except that by virtue of the soul's belonging to the body, we perceive it in a limited sense. But if a person journeys towards God and becomes existentially aware of his soul, he will discover that it is not bound by time nor the universe; rather it encompasses time and the different realms. He would then say that the spirit and the Resurrection world exist unbound by time. Thus, it is our limited perception bound by time and space that we assume that our soul is subject to time and say, "We exist now." It is true that the intermediate world is the more perfected continuation of this world and is not completely detached and possesses form. Even though it is not composed of material substance, it is still bound by time. Therefore, we can say, "The intermediate realm exists now." But about the Resurrection world, which is detached, is not bound by time, and is devoid of forms, we can only say, "The world of Resurrection exists."

The question then is, "If the Judgment Day and the spirit are detached, why do we not perceive them?" The answer is, "Because we have not become detached and have not perceived the meaning of detachment." We have not understood the meaning of Rūmī's guidance to perceive the world of detachment when he said,

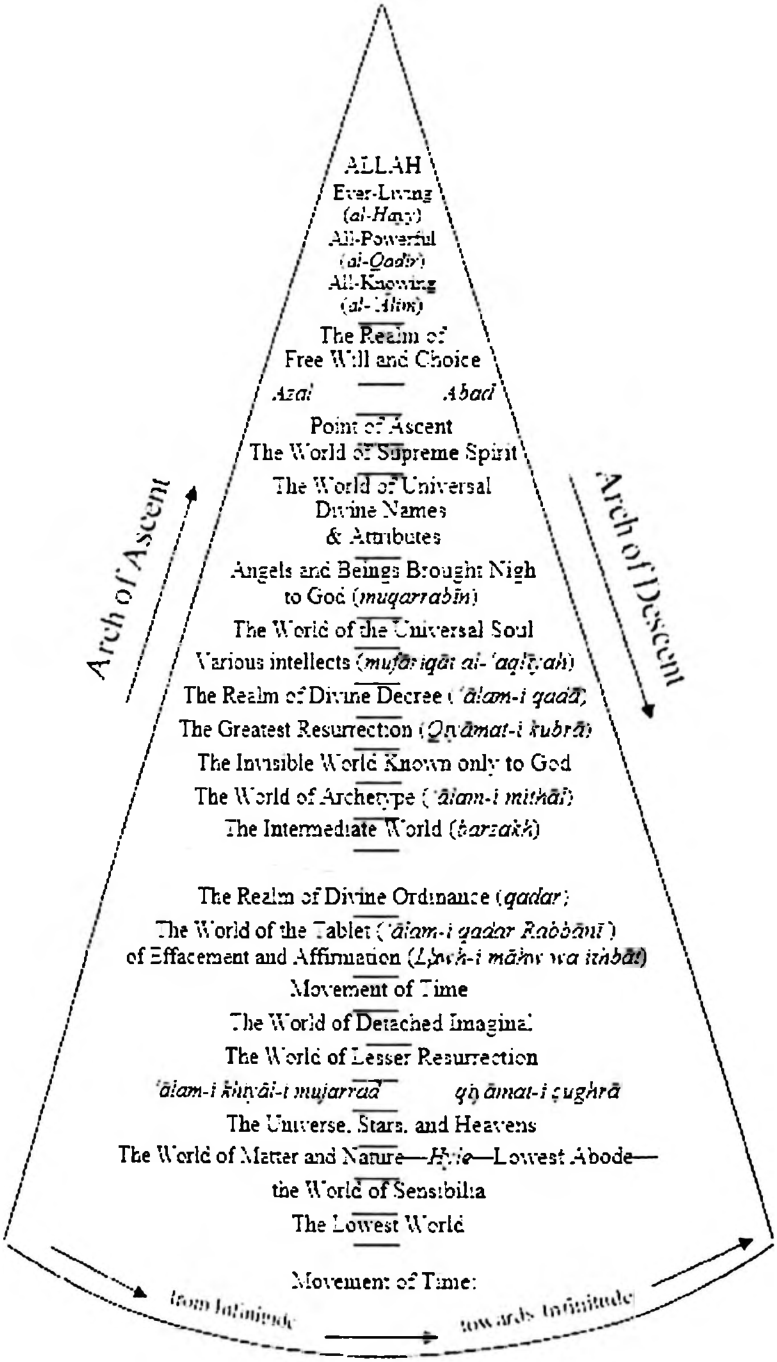
Go and become detached so
that you can see the Detached.[856]

Or Ḥāfiẓ when he wrote,

When you are unable to go beyond the world of nature
How could you expect to pass through the realm of the [Divine] path?
The Beauty of the Beloved does not have a veil before It
You remove the dust [before your eye] so that you can see Her Beauty.[857]

Once the veil is lifted, all of these truths will reveal themselves, just as the sun reveals itself when the clouds disperse: hence, *"We have now removed from thee thy covering, and so thy sight today is piercing."*[858]

[856] Rūmī
[857] Ḥāfiẓ, *Divān*, Pezhman edition, p. 51.
[858] Qur'an 50: 22.


ALLAH
Ever-Living
(al-Hayy)
All-Powerful
(al-Qadir)
All-Knowing
(al-'Alim)
The Realm of
Free Will and Choice
Azal
Abad
Point of Ascent
The World of Supreme Spirit
The World of Universal
Divine Names
& Attributes
Angels and Beings Brought Nigh
to God (muqarrabin)
The World of the Universal Soul
Various intellects (mufariqat al-'aqliyah)
The Realm of Divine Decree ('alam-i qada)
The Greatest Resurrection (Qiyamat-i kubra)
The Invisible World Known only to God
The World of Archetype ('alam-i mithal)
The Intermediate World (barzakh)
The Realm of Divine Ordinance (qadar)
The World of the Tablet ('alam-i qadar Rabbani)
of Effacement and Affirmation (Lawh-i mahw wa ithbat)
Movement of Time
The World of Detached Imaginal
The World of Lesser Resurrection
'alam-i khiyal-i mujarrad
qiyamat-i sughra
The Universe, Stars, and Heavens
The World of Matter and Nature—Hyle—Lowest Abode—
the World of Sensibilia
The Lowest World
Movement of Time:
from Infinitude
towards Infinitude
Arch of Ascent
Arch of Descent

The Sixth Premise: On the Day of Resurrection

This is the world of the Gathering of souls. Having traversed this world, all souls return unto God, returning back to Origin of their creation from which they descended. What does it means for all beings to have a "Day of Return"? All creatures have a "Day of Return," from the souls of mankind to those of animals and plants.

Even inanimate objects and angelic souls, prophets, and all the detached beings of the higher realms have a Day of Return. Their Day of Return refers to their annihilation and destruction, when they return unto that Divine Name from which they received existentiation. This means all things, after having descended, must ascend once more and return unto that same Divine Name that caused their first origination, and become annihilated in It. *"As He originated you so you will return..."*[859] and *"[As] We originated the first creation, so We shall bring it back again."*[860]

The first thing that God created was the Intellect, or Light, that is, the simple existent and infinite Mercy of God. The Return of the first thing that God created is the *"Return unto His Divine Essence."*[861] From that Divine Name and that first creation, He further created other detached beings: the spirits of angels, the intellects, the holy souls, and the rational souls.

From them, He created the particular Divine Names and the various beings of the world of multiplicity continually and in hierarchical order from the apex of the macrocosm, signified by the apogee of our diagram, to its base. In this chain, the "Return" of each being is in relation to that same source of its creation. Every being returns unto that source of its origin, becoming annihilated and destroyed in that particular Name of God, the Ever-Living and Ever-Lasting, from which it descended.

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[859] Qur'an 7: 29.

[860] Qur'an 21: 104.

[861] In numerous *aḥādīth,* the first creation is varyingly determined as intellect *('aql)*, light (*nūr*), and water (*mā'*).

Man will also return unto that source from which it was created, from whichever place his nature is derived, whether it be the highest heaven (*'iliyyīn*) or the lowest plane (*sijjīn*). When a person moves from the world of multiplicity to the world of unity, from the world of contingency to the world of the truth, it is termed "mustering." It refers to the "Realm of Gathering" (*ḥashr*), where all humankind will be gathered and will be turned inward, and will be finally annihilated. In authoritative dictionaries, "mustering" (*ḥashr*) is defined as "gathering and collecting." It is also stated in the Qur'an, *"that is a day mankind are to be gathered to, a day to witness...*"[862] meaning that mankind must be taken to a place where nothing enters his mind save God, where his entire being and existence is annihilated in His most glorious Divine Essence. This is the true meaning of *"to Him we return..."* There, injustice does not exist, sin ceases to be, delusion and confusion stop. That is the realm of Gathering, the station of unrestricted and unconditional detachment.

The Seventh Premise: On the realm of *nashr*, or Expansion and Opening

The "Realm of Mustering" is followed by the "Realm of Expansion." After contracting and becoming annihilated, being will once again open and expand. Just like a roll of cloth, after having been folded into itself and wrapped, it will be opened and expanded; all of its detail and dimensions, its figure and form, will reappear. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī provided the same meaning for *nashr* in his work, *al-Mīzān* [*fī tafsīr al-Qur'an*], in reference to verse 67: 15 (*"to Him is the Uprising"*). This is the same meaning we find for *nashr* in Arabic lexicons. It is defined as the opposite of contraction and wrapping, meaning "to open." With regard to the dead, it refers to revival, as the dead are resurrected for the reckoning on the Day of Judgment.

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[862] Qur'an 11: 103.

From what has been stated so far, "the Realm of Expansion" means the realm of reviving and life and refers to the Resurrection Day.[863] After all of humankind travels towards God and becomes annihilated in Him, again they journey from annihilation in God to subsistence [in Him] and become conscious of their existence and their deeds. They will be questioned about their deeds and judged and will be rewarded or punished according to their actions. Creation is rolled onto itself like a scroll, and its content is hidden; as soon as it comes undone, it will spill forth all that it held within. Here, creation persists by and through God. Here is the realm of "Subsistence after Annihilation" (*baqā' ba'd fanā'*).

The Qur'an describes the Day of Judgment as the Day on which "*unto Him you shall be turned.*" On that day the world of multiplicity comes to an end. All of creation will be contracted and compressed within itself. As the Qur'an also says, "*that which you ever asserted has now gone astray from you...*"[864] meaning whatever thoughts and conceptions you may have had will all be lost and become nonexistent.

In contrast, on the Day of Resurrection and the Realm of Expansion (*nashr*), the opposite takes place; that is to say, everything that was annihilated will return to existence once again. All that was hidden will appear again; and man will now become aware of all his deeds, of all his prayers and sins, all his intentions, character, and beliefs and all that became a part of his nature throughout his existence.

Now that these seven premises have been laid out and clarified, we can say: after a person is annihilated, he will subsist. The lowest form of this subsistence is that he will gain existential and intellectual dominion over all the multiplicities of his own being. In other words, this means that he will have dominion over time and space, as he will attain full consciousness of the life he had in his elemental body, from his birth until his death, along with all his actions in between. He

[863] Literally, the "Realm of Living and Life."
[864] Qur'an 6: 94.

will reign over all his actions, both his righteous and his evil deeds, and will attain this complete consciousness and full awareness not just of one moment within his life in this elemental body, but rather over his entire existence, with all its particularities and effects. Just as our spirits at this moment enjoy control over our bodies, at that time humankind's spirit will also have existential dominion of his body over his entire life [and not just of one moment], along with all its attributes and actions. He will fully realize dominion over himself, over his elemental body and its actions. He will attain presential knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) of his body and its actions [as opposed to his experiential knowledge].

And as we have already mentioned, man and his actions will appear in their true essences in this realm. There, in the celestial realms, the forms and true reality of all things are unveiled. Heaven and hell, reward and punishment, are the fulfillment of the essences and actions themselves and satiation by the true realities of our deeds. They are the embodying of the spirit and spiritual reality of our deeds. Therefore, each person will have full dominion over his elemental body. He must deal with whatever fires he has fueled and will reap whatever he has sown. This is not simply an intellectual and conceptual dominion over our actions. Rather, because the spirit is detached, it is an existential and total dominion over that body. And God knows best.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Fortieth Discourse

On the Resurrection of the Elemental Body, the Gathering of all Beings, and the Realm of *'arḍ* [Presenting to God]

God, the All-Wise, has stated in his Noble Book,

> *The day every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward and what it has done of evil; it will wish if there were only a far space between it and that day. God warns you that you beware of Him; and God is gentle with His servants.*[865]

We can deduce from this blessed verse that there will be a day when man will bear full witness and attain full consciousness of all his deeds; that on such a day he will so loathe his own despicable acts, those very effects and responses of his soul, that he will wish to separate those acts from himself, being utterly distraught over and deeply regretful of those actions. However, there will be no distancing himself. Those acts are necessarily connected to and associated with him, because they were committed by him, by his full will and choice. They result and emerge from his self, and therefore are inseparable from him.

In the previous discourse seven premises were mentioned in relation to the doctrine of the bodily Resurrection. That is not just the physical Resurrection, but also when the elemental body will present itself unto God with all its particularities, its consequences and effects, and all of its intentions and secrets, along with all the various dimensions of its behavior. Since mankind will be placed beyond time, he will have dominion over that body and will be able to perceive it. His entire life will flow simultaneously in front of him and he will perceive simultaneously his birth, death, and everything in between.

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[865] Qur'an 3: 30.

Man will hold this dominion on the Day of Resurrection at a boundless instant (*ān-i dahri*), where he has full dominion over all times and whatever is contained in time, and [shall become conscious of] all the acts he committed within his terrestrial life. This realization will take place after annihilation and after the day of "Gathering and Mustering," that is, in the station of subsistence in God, which is the station of differentiation (*maqām-i farq*), and the Realm of Expansion.

Nothing happens in the station of annihilation. That station is one of dissolution. Not even a glimpse of anything save God will exist; the only thing that will occur is immersion in God. But after that point, at the station of subsistence (*baqā'*), which follows the annihilation and is also known as the stage of *jam' al-jam'* ("the gathering of all"), the soul attains dominion over all realms of time and temporal beings, which include its own deeds from birth until death. At this point, the soul will be given not only the compiled (*tadwīnī*) book of his deeds, but also the engendered (*takwīnī*) book of his deeds. This record is that same book of actualization (*taḥaqquq*)—his book of existence and being—in which man will find present whatever he has done and brought into being. Man will learn presentially (*'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) and will bear witness to the essence and reality of his deeds in that engendered book. He will become conscious of everything that is known (*ma'lūm*) of his deeds and is within the domain of his soul. The soul will find command over its own knowledge and over itself. Having attained illumination in the station of detachment, and finding subsistence in God after annihilation, it will find dominion over its world of multiplicity. Just as now we have command over our faculties in this world, whether they be internal or external faculties, and we are the ultimate end of these faculties, and just as we have presential knowledge of our faculties and not acquired knowledge (*'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*), the soul will have command and dominion over its actions and deeds. It will have presential knowledge of the realities of all its deeds with all details, particularities, states, and moments. It will witness all things at a single non-temporal (*dahrī*) moment that does not end, change, or transform.

This wondrous realm is called the "Realm of Presentation (*'ālam-i 'arḍ*), which we arrive upon after the realms of mustering (*ḥashr*) and expansion (*nashr*). The realm of *ḥashr* is the realm of Gathering, and the realm of *nashr* is the realm of expansion of the soul into all of its multiplicity within that realm of subsistence. The "Realm of Presentation (*'arḍ*) is where man is presented to His Lord while he is fully conscious of and has dominion over the deeds that he committed in his earlier or later days: *"Then a soul shall know its works, the former and the latter."*[866] They present all of his acts to his Lord: *"and they shall be presented before their Lord in ranks—You have come to Us, as We created you upon the first time; nay, you asserted We should not appoint for you a tryst."*[867]

In this realm man will forget all his hopes and dreams, his belongings, his spouse, and even his children, and everything else that he relied on in the contingent world. Just as he was alone when he first came into this world, he will again be sent to this new realm entirely alone. He could not have even seen this as a possibility. Otherwise he would have prepared something for this new realm. Yes, *"on that day you shall be exposed, not one secret of yours concealed."*[868]

The person who has frivoled away his life will be addressed:

> *Upon the day when the unbelievers are exposed to the Fire. You dissipated your good things in your present life, and you took your enjoyment in them; therefore today you shall be recompensed with the chastisement of humiliation for that you waxed proud in the earth without right, and for your ungodliness.*[869]

"Good things" (*ṭayyibāt*) refers to a person's lifespan, intellect, power, knowledge, security, and peace, and all such things that he enjoyed in his animalistic life. God bestowed these purified assets on humankind for them to profit from, and

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[866] Qur'an 82: 5.
[867] Qur'an 18: 48.
[868] Qur'an 69: 18.
[869] Qur'an 46: 20.

to realize their potential and reach perfection. They are the means by which one can wayfare to gain proximity to God, and undertake the journey of meeting God (*liqā Allah*). He is to become a pilgrim to His Lord, to reach the realm of detachment and attain the real and true status of the soul that God has bestowed upon human beings. However, because of his ignorance and negligence, and his whims and desires, and at times deliberately and arrogantly, man will squander all of these God-given blessings in pursuit of illusive contingencies, as he leads a purely animalistic life. He will be presented to God empty-handed, without attaining perfections, and depleted of anything that he could use to go through different stations.

Since he encompasses everything that he did and is aware of them he cannot deny them and must admit their truth: "*Upon the day when the unbelievers are exposed to the Fire: 'Is not this the truth?'*"[870] This fire is the true reality of his deeds. How can he deny their reality? This is his own existence that is being presented to him.

Bodily Resurrection is an indispensable part the doctrines of Islam (*dharuriyāt al-islām*). This is an undeniable fact. However, none of the scholars to this date have considered material and elemental Resurrection a necessary part of fundamental Islamic beliefs. Even Mullā Ṣadrā and Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī did not prove the Resurrection of the material and elemental body.[871] But by God's grace we have proven this elemental material Resurrection on the basis of the aforementioned premises. All praise is due to God, and all Bounty is from Him. Now we must see whether Resurrection and the Judgment Day are particular to man, or whether other beings also have their Resurrection.

Return to God is mentioned in several Qur'anic verses.

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[870] Qur'an 46: 34.

[871] From Ibn Sīnā to Shaykh Ishrāq, Bahmanyār, and others, none has proven this type of Resurrection.

....and unto God is the homecoming.[872]

Surely unto God all things come home.[873]

...and unto God all matters are returned.[874]

Mullā Ṣadrā, in the ninth volume of his *Asfār*, emphasizes and reinforces that the belief in bodily Resurrection—whether in the elemental or the archetypal (*mithāl*) body—is in line with the *Sharī'ah* and Islamic philosophy. He considers it part of the true faith. For one to deny this belief necessarily leads to departure from the principles of gnosis and deviation [from the straight path]. This would prevent all faculties and natural potentials to attain perfection. Indeed, the desire for perfection will be killed or rendered sterile. To deny bodily Resurrection is, in a sense, to reject God's act and turn it null and void as He placed all natural traits and engendered qualities in man's being, qualities by virtue of which all spiritual and non-spiritual faculties such as joy or pain tolerance and rejection exist side by side.

Mullā Ṣadrā then states that the philosophers have proven that all faculties and potentials—whether higher or lower—have ultimate natural ends. Every being has a direction that God pulls him towards and guides and leads him along. "*Every man has his direction to which he turns...*"[875] As we made clear, all beings in the natural world are in motion because of that same trans-substantial and essential motion that exists within them, attested to by the following verse: "*There is no creature that crawls, but He takes it by the forelock. Surely my Lord is on a straight path.*"[876] God has taken the reigns of the destiny of all souls and pulls them towards Himself. All creatures in all realms

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[872] Qur'an 3: 28.
[873] Qur'an 42: 53.
[874] This statement appears in several Qur'anic verses, including 2: 210 and 3: 109.
[875] Qur'an 2: 148.
[876] Qur'an 11: 56.

must return back unto God, even those inanimate objects and plants.

We proved that because the natural world is not a void, and no created being is static, all beings are necessarily in motion towards their destination and final ends. These ends are particular to each being and from the inanimate to the plants and animals, from mankind to Satan (Shayṭān), the Resurrection and gathering of each being is unique to itself. That is the reason that regarding the Resurrection and Gathering of different types of people, the Qur'an says, *"On the day that We shall muster the godfearing to the All merciful with pomp; and drive the evildoers into Gehenna herding..."*[877]

For the gathering of the different satanic beings, the Qur'an adds, *"Now, by thy Lord, We shall surely muster them, and the Satans."*[878]

On the animals: *"...when the savage beasts shall be mustered..."*[879] and, *"and the birds, duly mustered, every one to him reverting..."*[880]

Regarding the Return of the plants, it says,

> *and the stars and the trees bow themselves...*[881]

and,

> *And thou beholdest the earth blackened, then, when We send down water upon it, it quivers, and swells, and puts forth herbs of every joyous kind..." until "and God shall raise up whosoever is within the tombs."*[882]

The Qur'an also discusses the gathering of all creatures:

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[877] Qur'an 19: 86.
[878] Qur'an 19: 68.
[879] Qur'an 81: 52.
[880] Qur'an 38: 19.
[881] Qur'an 55: 6.
[882] Qur'an 22: 5–7.

> *And on the day We shall set the mountains in motion, and thou seest the earth coming forth, and We muster them so that We leave not so much as one of them behind; and they shall be presented before their Lord in ranks*[883]

And,

> *Surely We shall inherit the earth and all that are upon it, and unto Us they shall be returned.*[884]

and,

> *As We originated the first creation, so We shall bring it back again.*[885]

The above discourse was a brief account of Mullā Ṣadrā's views. In his exquisite treatise, *Risāla-yi ḥashr* [*The Treatise on Gathering*], a resource that is substantive and concise, Mullā Ṣadrā intends to prove the Resurrection of all beings by dividing them into five categories.

The first category of being is the various intellects (*mufāriqāt al-'aqlīyah*) that subsist in the Realm of Divine Decree (*'ālam-i qaḍā Allah*). This is in actuality God's knowledge in the form of the various beings. They are the keys to the hidden and the Treasures of Mercy that descend in a measure that is both known and defined (by God).

The second category is that of the intelligible rational spirits that belong to both higher and lower substances. Their realm is the realm of Divine Ordinance (*qadar*) and the Tablet of Effacement and Affirmation (*lawḥ al-māhw wa ithbāt*).

The third group is the particular rational spirits and the imaginal souls that is associated with fire and fiery substances and includes the *jinn*, satanic beings, and some humans.

The fourth category includes the plant souls, part of nature that permeate and run through the various bodies and animate them. These souls in turn move because of the movement of the

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[883] Qur'an 18: 47–48.
[884] Qur'an 19: 40.
[885] Qur'an 19: 40.

bodies, and are renewed through the renewal of the bodies. God refers to these souls in the following verse: "*Terrible angels who disobey not God in what He commands them and do what they are commanded.*"[886] The angels that guard hell (*zabānīyah*) are of this level of beings, as are the spirits who animate the clouds and the rains, the seas and the mountains, the resources of the Earth, the plants, and other such beings.

The fifth category is bodies and substances, which are the lowest of the low worlds and the place where the downfallen descend and where the arrogant reside.

[Mullā Ṣadrā] then adds that no creature is created without reason. All beings have a mover and cause; if they are compound substances, they will contain all of the four causes, namely, the efficient, the final, the material, and the formal; whereas if they are simple substances, they will only have efficient and final causes. It has been proven that in the acts of God, the final cause is His Divine Essence, that is, the Ultimate End of all ends (*Ghāyat al-ghāyāt*). There is no doubt that the final end of each being is the thing towards which it moves by its very essence. And it will reach the thing unless there is some obstacle or hindrance that prevents it from reaching it. Any end that cannot possibly be reached by a being should not be named as such except metaphorically, because it would be a contradiction in terms (*khulf*). It is clear, then, that all contingent beings aspire towards God, Most High, by their very nature and their natural temperaments. They yearn for Him through their spiritual motion, longing to encounter Him and reach His Presence. Since this dynamic movement and yearning for the encounter with God is instilled by Him in all beings by their very nature, it cannot be aimless, without a purpose, or inconclusive. Inevitably, it must ultimately be attained. It must necessarily realize this end, and obstacles or shortcomings cannot be permanent and will disappear after a while. The hindrance must ultimately pass, even if it may last a long time. The nature of a thing must return to its initial and essential

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886 Qur'an 81: 51.

determinants, and the nature of all things will one day return to their origins. And it is clear that the end of a thing is greater and superior to the thing itself, and the end of a substance is substantively more perfect than the substance itself. It is obvious that the final end of a being is existentially superior and nobler than being itself. That final end has in turn a final end of its own that it moves towards and yearns for. This chain continues until it ends in the Ultimate End of all ends (*Ghāyat al-ghāyāt*). This is the end of all motion and the goal of all yearning. It is the locus and lodging of those who love the Divine and who are in need of and yearn for Him.[887]

This brief excerpt (from Mullā Ṣadrā's discourse) makes it clear that all beings will be resurrected and returned [to God], from the inanimate objects to material substances and the prime *hyle* to the various intellects, spirits from the highest abodes of heaven (*a'lā'-ye 'illiyīn*), from the hallowed angels and the Holy Spirit and the particular angels to the plants and the animals, and from satanic beings to human souls and the like.

There exist some beings whose power, knowledge, and life are greater than all other beings. The *Sharī'ah* calls these beings the Holy Spirit, the angels who were brought nigh to God, the universal Divine Names, and the like. Muslim philosophers name them the detached intellects (*'uqūl-i mujarradah)*, the dispersed or differentiated intellects (*'uqūl-i mufāraqah*), and similar terms. These beings enjoy an incredibly exalted status, and their dominion is quite expansive. These are beings like the angel Gabriel, Isrāfīl, Michael (Mikā'īl), and 'Isrā'īl, who are the intermediaries through whom the Divine Essence emanates His grace to all the various realms. Their existence is expansive, and their knowledge and power are great. For example, God provides subsistence and dispensation to all the existent realms through the angel Mikā'īl (Michael), whether the subsistence and dispensation be spiritual and inward, or conceptual and intellectual, or even material. Jibra'īl (Gabriel) provides consciousness, knowledge, and understanding to the contingent

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[887] A free and paraphrased translation from the *Risāla-yi ḥashr* [*Treatise on Resurrection*], pp. 341–2.

realm. Isrāfīl is responsible for expanding the realm of life. in the material world. the intermediate world. and the realm of the Resurrection. He bestows life on all beings. whether it be the heavenly bodies. the material forms. or even the universe or anything else that exists. This emanation of life continues at every moment and continues perpetually. as long as those beings exist. Isrā'īl. on the other hand. is charged with death. He extracts the souls of all those beings at every moment. In this way. each being lives and dies at each moment. This cycle of contraction and expansion. of momentary life and death. continues perpetually for all beings and at every moment. so as to perfect that being and connect him to the Hereafter and his encounter with God. Isrāfīl continuously expands all beings. whereas Isrā'īl perpetually contracts all beings. The latter brings death. while the former gives life.

The Holy Spirit is nearer to the Divine Essence than all of these angels who are brought nigh to God are. and its station is greater and more sublime than all. [I]n it "*the angels and the Spirit descend. by the leave of their Lord. upon every command.*"[888]

The Holy Spirit is referred to in this verse in the singular. whereas the angels are in the plural. It implies that the particular human spirit has a lower existence than that universal and supreme spirit. Indeed. the creation of the Holy Spirit is quite astounding when its dominion over other beings is taken into account.

When the Holy Spirit and the angels brought nigh wish to return to God. it will take them 50.000 years to do so: "*from God. the Lord of the Stairways. To Him the angels and the Spirit mount up. in a day whereof the measure is fifty thousand years.*"[889] Here. a "day" refers to an era or age. meaning in a period whereof the measure is 50.000 years. The notion that is sometimes heard among people is that "There is a day in the world of Resurrection that will last for 50.000 years." This is incorrect. Rather it refers to the length of the period that it will

[888] Qur'an 97: 4.
[889] Qur'an 70: 3–4.

take for the angels to traverse from their respective realms to reach the divine proximity. After having descended unto the earth, the Holy Spirit and those angels will return to their first stations. After having completed their natural cycles, they will ascend towards their Lord. It is this journey that will take them 50,000 years, to which the Qur'an alludes: "*Exalter of ranks is He, Possessor of the Throne, casting the Spirit of His bidding upon whomever He wills of His servants. That he may warn them of the Day of Encounter....*"[890]

A person who encounters the Holy Spirit and is in contact with it is perfectly fulfilled [spiritually]. He can awaken those around him who are asleep, and bring true awareness to those who are unaware, in just the same way as the prophets, Imāms, and Friends of God did. Otherwise, how can a man who is asleep himself awaken others?

In short, the annihilating and resurrecting and gathering of the Holy Spirit and the angels brought nigh is the Divine Essence Itself, whereas the particular human spirits that govern over the body and man's nature are annihilated in the same body from which they arise and from which they are drawn. The particular spirits of the great prophets, the noble Imāms, and those who are near to God are annihilated in the Holy Spirit, which in turn is annihilated in the Divine Essence. And a being that is annihilated in another annihilated being is then annihilated in that [higher] being. Following this chain, therefore, all beings become finally annihilated in the Divine Essence. According to the injunction of religion, the Holy Spirit and the angels brought nigh are also called "the First of God's Creation," "the Realm of Decrees" (*'ālam al-qaḍā*), the Mother of All Books (*umm al-kitāb*), and "the Guarded Tablet" (*lawḥ al-maḥfūz*). Every being that is manifested or created will first have its form determined in that realm. In other words, the Realm of Universal Divine Decrees determines each being's destiny, and in a lower realm, the Realm of Destiny, that being's form and measure are determined, and it descends to a lower

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[890] Qur'an 40: 15.

realm in order to become realized and attain existence. The realm of Divine Ordinance or predestination (*'alam-i qadar*), sometimes also called the Tablet of Effacement and Affirmation (*lawḥ al-māḥw wa ithbāt*), is resurrected in the realm above it, which is this Realm of Divine Decrees. These realms are all vast oceans of the treasures of divine Knowledge, Power, and Life, which determine the measure and destinies of beings of this world. Below these realms are the particular angels who are in charge of governance of the higher and lower realms, as well as the caretakers of the earth and the heavenly bodies. They fulfill other functions as well that the Qur'an refers to and that have been mentioned in some of the previous discourses. They are also called the Particular Caretaking Spirits (*arwāḥ mudabbirah juz'īyah*), and their abode is below the Realm of Determination and the Tablet of Effacement and Affirmation.

According to the Qur'an, the descent of [divine] command from the Realm of Command through these angels, fulfilling their mission and their subsequent Return to God, takes approximately 1000 years if measured according to our worldly time: *"He directs the affair from heaven to earth, then it goes up to Him in one day, whose measure is a thousand years of your counting."*[891]

This means that it takes them approximately 500 years to descend to this world and complete their tasks, and 500 years for their Return, making the journey a total of 1000 years.

Therefore, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the angels brought nigh to God from the Divine Essence towards the Realm of Determination, and from there to the realms of the particular angels in charge of various functions in these different realms, [and from there] to the natural world and completion of their arc of descent in the realms of multiplicity, and finally their ascent journeying towards the apex and all the realms in between takes a total of 100,000 years, with each arc lasting approximately 50,000 years. According to this account, the journey of descent and ascent of the particular angels is 1000

[891] Qur'an 32: 5.

years, whereas it is 100,000 years for the Holy Spirit and those angels brought nigh. Explaining exactly what is meant by a year is beyond the scope of this discussion.

The annihilation and Resurrection of particular angels will take place through their annihilation and integration (*indikāk*) into the spirits of the angels brought nigh and thereafter in the Holy Spirit. Finally through them all beings will be annihilated and resurrected in the Divine Essence.

The third is the Resurrection of the particular souls (*nufūs-i juz'īyah*) that take care of the material substance of this realm. They are the imaginal souls that are associated with the fiery and smoky bodies of the satanic beings that are created from fire, or the *jinn*, which are created from smoke and gas. Even some human beings like those sinful and resolute disbelievers, who themselves contain all three elements of life, soul, [and spirit], are in this category. Their Resurrection is like fire itself, as they are by their very essence from heat and fire. There are many verses in the Qur'an that describe the Resurrection of the *jinn* and these satanic beings, and we refer our readers to those verses.

As for humankind, if they are of "those brought nigh" (*muqarrabīn*) and the truly sincere, they will be resurrected in the Holy Spirit. If they are among the Companions of the Right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) and those who follow the Middle Path (*mutawassitīn*), they are resurrected in heaven and among all its beauties and wonders. And if they are of the disbelievers, then they will be resurrected in hellfire, as was previously mentioned.

As for animals, they will all be resurrected unto that universal spirit that governs over them and manages their affairs. They will return unto the lord of their species (*rabb an-nau'*) or the angel that is in charge of their affairs and guards them. Some of the animals that are consumed by man are annihilated in man's existence. *"No creature is there crawling on the earth, no bird flying with its wings, but they are nations*

like unto yourselves. We have neglected nothing in the Book; then to their Lord they shall be mustered."[892]

Animals, just like man, the satanic beings, and others, will return to the origins of their existence. They will journey back towards God through that same point of the celestial realm from which they descended and their essence was determined. They will return to that same place from which their natures were derived, and will be annihilated in their particular angel, their particular universal spirit, and the particular lord of their species. That angel will then be annihilated in a higher and more universal spirit, and that universal spirit will attain further annihilation, until we arrive at the Divine Essence Itself, which is the locus of annihilation and Return for all beings. Thus, the origins of creation for beings are different from one another. In reality, the Divine Names and Attributes fill all of creation from the most universal levels of the hierarchy to the most particular; and the Return and Resurrection of each Name and Attribute is in the Name and Attribute above it, which is its point of origin.

The fourth Resurrection is that of the plants, which because they possess life and some degree of consciousness have a higher level of being than the inanimate objects. By virtue of the three faculties they possess, namely, consumption, maturation, and reproduction, they are said to possess a soul. Therefore, they will be resurrected in a similar way to the Resurrection of the animal souls. After having achieved some levels of perfection, they will return to that same origin from which they were actualized and which governs over them and administers their affairs. Other plants that have been consumed by animals will gain proximity to the level of animals, and those who ascend even farther, were consumed by humans, and were integrated into the body of humans will become closer to the level of humankind. The Resurrection of these plants will be on a higher plane and they will enjoy an even closer station to God on the Day of Resurrection. This very same movement and development of plants is their journey towards their

[892] Qur'an 6: 38.

Resurrection, which is referred to in the Qur'an: *[N]othing is, that does not proclaim His praise, but you do not understand their extolling.*[893]

Finally, the fifth is the Resurrection of the inanimate beings. All inanimate beings, even prime matter and pure *hyle*, will have its own Resurrection. Since there was a purpose in the creation of each one of them, by means of their trans-substantial motion and other types of existential motions, they will continue to come existentially closer to their end. Thereupon they can perfect all their imperfections, as their constant change and movement will lead them towards Resurrection and Return [to God].

[893] Qur'an 17: 44.

Index of *Aḥādīth*

A. *Aḥādīth Qudsi*

1. My servant draws near to Me by nothing dearer to Me than that which I have enjoined upon him. And My servant does not cease to approach Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. If he calls Me I will respond to him, and if he asks Me for something, I will give it to him. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate to hurt him. (261)

2. I have prepared for My righteous servants things that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart has experienced. I inform you of that which I [prepared] for him. If you wish, (*sha'tom*) read this [verse of the Qur'an]: "*Nobody knows what I have hidden for them [My righteous servants] that eyes will be refreshed.*" (185)

3. O son of Adam, I am the Rich who does not become poor. Perform what I ordered you, then I will make you one who is rich and does not become poor. O son of Adam, I am the Living who does not die, perform what I ordered you, then I will make you one who is living and does not die. O son of Adam, I say "Be" and it is, perform what I ordered you, then I will make you such as you say "Be" and it is.

4. O My servant! Obey Me so that I place you as an example. I am the Living who never dies, I will make you the living who will not die. I am the Rich who will never become poor. I will make you the rich that will not become poor! Whatever I will to become, is and I will make you whatever you will, be. (186, 267)

5. My heaven and My earth cannot encompass Me, but the heart of My believing servant can. (174)

6. Whenever I know that my remembrance is in my servant's heart, I will take charge of his affairs and become his companion, his party in conversation, and his intimate companion. (269)

7. My remembrance is for those who remember, My paradise for the obedient servants, My love to those who long for Me, [But] I [Myself] am for those who love Me. (269)

8. Inform all people on My earth that I am the Friend of those who love me, Companion of those who become My companion, intimate Friend to those who remember Me, protecting Friend of those who become My friend. I choose him who chooses Me, and obey who is obedient to Me. (317)

9. Whoever loves Me and I know his love is sincere, then I shall choose him for Me and shall grant him such a life that nobody can precede him. He who seeks Me truly will find Me, and he who seeks other than Me will not find Me. O people of the world, avoid pride of the world which is not for you. Seek My generosity, My companionship and friendship. Be sincere with Me so that I be sincere with you and I hasten towards your love. (317)

B. *Aḥādīth Nabawī* (Prophetic Traditions)

1. As the son of man gets older two traits also get older along with him and they are greed and attachment to the worldly desires (*tool al-amal*). (5)

2. The *Āyat al-Kursi* (2: 254): The seven heavens and seven earths in relation to the Divine Throne are like a ring lost in a vast and endless desert, and the relation between God's status and that of the Throne is just like that ring lost in the desert. (142)

3. This world is a like a farmland for the Hereafter. In the Hereafter man will harvest what he plants in it today. (148)

4. The grave [can be] a garden among gardens of paradise, or [it can be] a ditch among the ditches of hell. (155)

5. When a man dies, indeed his Day of Resurrection has started. (140, 155)

6. Indeed Friends of God do not die, but they are transferred from one house to another house. (155)

7. Beware! Avoid committing injustice. Verily injustice leads to darkness on the Day of Judgment. (171)

8. He who practices what he knows, God will give him the knowledge of that which he knows not. (183)

9. People are in a state of sleep and when they die they wake up. (184)

10. My community will not be questioned or punished for nine things they may commit. These include,

1. When they commit an unintended mistake;
2. When they do not remember to observe a duty or forget to do so;
3. Actions they do reluctantly or under pressure of others;
4. When they commit an act and do not know that God has forbidden such an action;
5. Things that are out of their power and beyond their ability to do;
6. When they do an action under duress and threat, like borrowing money with interest when they had no other choice, or breaking their fast under the pressure of an oppressive ruler;
7. Being jealous of someone without expressing it or acting upon it;
8. Actions they may commit due to anxiety, pessimism, or a bad omen;

9. Some doubtful thoughts that may come to someone's mind regarding God, His Power, and His creatures as long as he does not express them. (192)

11. He who intends to migrate for the sake of God and His Messenger, his journey will be towards God and His Messenger. And he who intends to migrate for the sake of a woman or a treasure will journey towards them. (202)

12. The torment of the grave is the expiations (*kaffārah*) that a believer pays for God's bounties that a believer wasted in the world. (159, 212)

13. By the One in whose hand is my life these all will take place. O Salmān! At that [end of] time corrupt and oppressive rulers will rule over the affairs of believers. Their ministers will be corrupt, and scholars will be oppressors, and those whom they trust will betray them. Evil and reprehensible practices will be condoned as good acts and good acts will be seen as reprehensible. Those who are trusted will be treacherous. (236)

14. One of the signs of the end of time is that people will take [daily] prayer lightly and spoil them. They will follow their appetite and respond to the desires of the carnal soul. They will glorify money and wealth and sell their religion for the world. In such a situation, the heart of believers will melt as salt will dissolve in water, as they see reprehensible practices before their own eyes and will have no power to change the situation. (235)

15. When the end of time approaches, evil and sin will be considered good deeds and good deeds will be seen as evil. Treacherous people will be trusted [by the people] and honest men will be accused of treason. Men who are deceptive and who lie will be recognized as truthful and men of truth will be seen as mendacious and lying. (236)

16. Indeed [O 'Ali!] there is an abode for you in paradise and you are its *dhu'lqarnayn*. (244)

17. We [the prophets] were commanded to speak to the people in accordance with the level of their intellect. (250)

18. I do not descend on the heart of my servant until I know that in it there is love and sincerity to obey Me and seek My countenance. Then I take to myself the conduct of his affairs. (264)

19. Almighty God says: "When I know that My servant's mind is preoccupied with Me, I will direct his worldly desires to ask Me and pray to Me, then if he wants to commit an error I will not allow it to happen. These are my true friends (*awliyā'*). They are truly courageous heroes (*abtal*). For their sake I spare sinful people of the earth from punishment. (268)

20. The love of the world is the source of all wrongs. (312)

21. Die before you die. (316)

22. I saw the glory of my Lord—Majestic and Glorious is He—while there was no veil between me and Him except one white ruby (*yāqūt bayda*) in a green garden. (316)

23. O my God, show me all things as they are. (317)

24. I heard from God that "there is no God but Allah, who is my fortress, whoever enters into My fortress is immune from My punishment." (318)

25. The heart of the believer is pure. In it there is a shining light and the heart of the unbeliever is dark and fallen. (323)

26. If there were not Satans around the faithful heart, the children of Adam could see the world of Dominion [*malakūt*]. (323)

27. He who establishes and leaves behind a good tradition (practice), he will have the rewards of all those who act upon that tradition after his death. And he who leaves an evil tradition

behind will receive the punishment of all who act upon that tradition. (216)

28. He who does not scrutinize his account every single day is not one of us. If he does a good deed he will ask God to enable him to do more good. If he commits an evil, he will repent and ask God for forgiveness (148)

C. Index of Narrations of Shī'a Imāms

Imām 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib

1. O man, your cure is within you, you understand not,
and so is your pain and you do not see
You assume that you are a small particle
but there is a whole universe within you
the greatest macrocosm
You are a clear book of [your Lord] and
every letter of that book reveals [God's] mysteries
You do not need any thing extraneous to your own being
to inform you of that which is written in that book. (145)

2. ...this place [Wādi al-Salām Cemetery] is the dust of believers, we are not to disturb them in their own house. O son of Nabāṭah, if the veils are removed before your eyes you will see that believers are gathered here in circles and talk to each other. Behind the spirit of each believer there is the spirit of an infidel in the dry and hostile land of the desert (*barahūt*). (219)

3. The good deed (*ḥasanah*) is to attain knowledge of *wilāyah*, and the love of the Progeny (*Ahl al-Bayt*) of the Prophet. The evil deed (*sayyi'ah*) in contrast, is to reject *wilāyah* and be hostile to the household of the Messenger of God. (259)

4. I was your neighbor and for a short while my body lived as your neighbor. (271)

5. O God! Place my tongue in your remembrance eternally and make my heart mad by your love. (301)

6. When this world perishes, only the glory of God remains, nothing accompanies Him, just as it was before creation. No occasion, space, moment and time are there. The deadlines and the periods of times will perish and years and hours will be demolished. There is but the Almighty One who is the Return of all things. (305)

7. By God! If all veils are removed my certainty will not increase. (317)

8. God has a special wine for His friends that when they drink, they become intoxicated. When they become intoxicated, they will be joyful, and when they become joyful they will become purified, when they are purified they shall melt, when they melt, they shall become pure. When they become pure, they shall seek Me. When they seek Me, they shall find Me. When they find Me, they shall be connected to Me. When they are connected to Me, I shall be connected to them. And when I become connected to them, there is no separation between them and their Beloved. (317)

9. If man keeps his nature in harmony and balance and avoids contradictions, then he can associate with and participate in [the turning] of the sevenfold heavens and supreme beings. (345)

10. By the Time and by the number of nights,
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of waves in the oceans,
"There is no god but God,"
His Mercy is better than all things people can earn,
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of thorns and trees,
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of hair and wool,

"There is no god but God,"
By all the stones and clay,
"There is no god but God,"
By all the blinks of all eyes,
"There is no god but God,"
And by the "close of the night,"
and "the breath of the morning,"
"There is no god but God,"
By the number of winds in deserts
and rocks,
"There is no god but God,"
From today until "The day that the trumpet is blown,"
"There is no god but God." (386)

Imām Ḥusayn ibn 'Ali

12. [Such] People are slaves of the world. Religion for them is like a drop of water on their tongues. They defend religion only as much as it provides for their worldly needs. When the time of trial comes it will be shown how few in number the [true] believers are. (356)

Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn Sajjād

13. Astonishing, indeed entirely astonishing, is he who denies (his own) death, while he sees others die every day and night. (390)

14. Oh God! I call You in my supplication [knowing] You are everywhere hoping that You hear my call. (286)

15. In that moment [blowing the trumpet], the Almighty will say in a very loud voice, which can be heard by heaven and earth: "To whom belongs the dominion today?" There is nobody to answer. Then God will answer Himself, saying: "for the One Almighty God." (305)

16. [O My God,] He who departs towards you has a short distance to you. Indeed, You do not veil yourself to your

creatures; what veils them is that they desire other than You. (316)

17. When I hear God say, *"Have they not seen how We come to the land reducing it of its outlying parts?"* my soul becomes generous in rushing hastily towards death, for it refers to the death of scholars. (76)

Imām Bāqir

18. As the rays of the sun are separated from it when the sun rises and returns to it when it sets, similarly, every being ultimately returns to its origin and unites with its own kind. (132)

19. The abased and downtrodden (*mustad'āfīn*) are not a homogenous group. Some are very different from some others. In short, whoever faces the *qiblah* in his prayer and is not hostile to the Imāms can fall into this category. (197)

20. Those who are deferred to God's command (*murjaūna li amri'llah*) are people who were infidels before and killed many believers like Ḥamza[894] and Ja'far.[895] Then they entered Islam and accepted One God, but faith did not enter their hearts and they did not become like believers so as to deserve paradise. On the other hand, they were no longer infidels so as to deserve hell. They will remain in that state until God decides to punish them or forgive them. (200)

Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq

21. It was said to the Angel of Death, "How dost thou seize the spirits in a single moment while some of them are in the east and some are in the west?" The Angel of Death, upon him be peace, said, "I [simply] call them and they respond." (71)

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[894] Ḥamza, the Prophet's uncle.

[895] Ja'far Ṭayyār was the step-brother of 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib.

22. When the moment of death of a person arrives, Satan sends one of his agents to command him to disbelief and create doubt in his faith until his soul departs his body. If one is a true believer, Satan will not succeed. So when the moment of your death arrives utter the *Shahādah* (*Lā ilāha ill'lLah, Muhammadun Rasūl'lLah*) till your soul departs your body. (134)

23. Beware! Scrutinize the account of your soul before they do it for you. Indeed on the Day of Judgment there will be 50 stations where they will stop you and you will wait for 1000 years in each of those stations. (148)

24. People cannot dismiss their duties and obligation until they search, ask, and learn. (193)

25. They [the believers] will be in their apartments in heaven, eating heavenly food and drinking heavenly wine and say, "O Lord! Bring us the Day of Judgment and fulfill that which You promised us, and connect our first descendent to our last." (216)

26. The [spirit of a] believer visits his family and sees what he loves about them but what he dislikes will be hidden from him. The [spirit of] a non-believer also visits his family and relatives but sees only that which he dislikes in them and things he likes will be hidden from him. (216)

27. You commit sin against God while you claim you love him
This is indeed an innovation in your behavior
If your love for God is sincere, you must be obedient to Him
For a lover indeed must be obedient towards his beloved. (228)

28. By God! We are God's most beautiful names. God does not accept anything from people except through knowing us. (274)

29. The Image of God is His prophets and friends. (286)

30. The faithful heart is pure. It is a heart that sees its lord and there is nothing else in it. (323)

31. The heart that is filled with infidelity or doubt is dark. People are invited to purify their hearts so that they will be prepared for the Hereafter. (323)

32. When God wills to resurrect His creation, He will command the skies to rain upon the earth for 40 days, and [as a result] all organs of the body will gather and the flesh will grow [once again]. (388)

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